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# The principal as minister : a reflective study of the prophetic and pastoral components of the principalship.

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# THE PRINCIPAL AS MINISTER

## A Reflective Study of the Prophetic and Pastoral Components of the Principalship

By

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## ABSTRACT

The need for moral leadership in schools compels us to seek new models for school leadership. This self-study captures the actual experience of a beginning principal using a reflective practitioner methodology in an effort to the explore the "principal as minister" metaphor. The purpose of the study is to discover the similarities and differences between the role of a principal and a minister in a particular school setting and in the context of one principal's experience. Stories and vignettes of the first year and a half of the principalship were written using the participant observer lens. Reflection on the applicability and use of the "principal as minister" are a key focus of the study.

The purpose of the study was two-fold: to explore the fit between the role of the principal and the minister and to study how leadership practice of one principal was affected by reflection on the "principal as minister" metaphor.

Findings identify similarities between the role of a principal and a minister. Specifically, both share the following four functions: Pastoral, Prophetic, Priestly, and Pedagogic. In addition, sixteen skill dimensions are demonstrated: enabling others, developing trust, affirming others, sharing self, healing others, managing conflict, establishing vision, eliciting faith, admonishing others, building community, teaching others, modeling best

practice, giving blessings, establishing ritual, and presiding and celebrating. Findings indicate that the use of the "principal as minister" metaphor provided a dynamic and interrelated "talkback" system for studying leadership practice in the participant-observer's experience. The metaphor was most often evoked in situations that invited competing agendas. The metaphor served both as a purpose and as a method in guiding leadership practice. Findings also reveal that reflection provided a consistent focus and enhanced awareness of the principal's role.

Implications of the study for leadership theory and staff development are discussed.

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Dr. Whitford and Dr. Ruscoe have served as mentors throughout my doctoral experience. They challenged me to shape my doctoral experience into something worthy of meaning and import in my life and my profession. Their "So what?" question has enabled me to find and integrate my own truth in a deeper, surer way. To them I give tribute for exemplifying the noble work and call of teaching.

The members of the Scottish Rite Foundation provided me the opportunity to pursue doctoral study. As a benefactor of their social commitment, I have been transformed by their deeds and their mission, as conveyed by member Albert Pike, "What we have done for ourselves alone dies with us. What we have done for others and the world remains and is

immortal."

This endeavor is dedicated to mom. It has been an act of love and serves as a monument to her, culminating in graduation on Mother's Day. I celebrate her presence in my life, which she so selflessly enriched through hers.

Lastly, I am profoundly grateful to my husband, Jim, whose generous spirit and support ground me and bless me daily. He has always been, like my mother, "the wind beneath my wings."

May the legacy of my life pass on to Kendra, who shares my dreams.

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# CHAPTER I

# THE PRINCIPAL AS MINISTER

*I shall be telling this with a sigh*
*Somewhere ages and ages hence:*
*Two roads diverged in a wood, and I--*
*I took the one less traveled by,*
*And that has made all the difference.*

*(Robert Frost, in Lathem, 1969)*

## Introduction

My professional career reached a crossroads when I became interested in furthering graduate study in either my chosen profession, educational administration, or a new profession, ministry. At the time I was an assistant principal at an urban middle school.

In deliberating about the choice between education and ministry, I began to reflect upon all the ministerial roles I have played in my capacity as an educational leader. As an assistant principal, I was called one Christmas Eve morning to come to the home of one of my students who had just lost his father; the family turned to me to provide comfort to the adolescent. That same year a seventh grade boy with a heart problem lay in critical condition in a hospital, where I waited with parents and family. A teacher on the verge of a nervous breakdown found his way to my office, and I was able to obtain psychiatric assistance for him. A grieving mother

reached out for comfort when her daughter was arrested for possession of a hand gun.

Prior to becoming an assistant principal in the public school system, I had served as principal of a small, alternative school program for incarcerated youth in a non-public community treatment program, where I ministered to troubled youth daily.

In the course of my deliberation between educational administration and ministry, I reflected upon my work as a lay leader in my church, where I had initiated and coordinated an adult religious education program before I had become a principal. My work in this adult program focused on human growth and development in ways similar to working with teachers in school staff development programs. Though I recognized that the role of the minister in the church was much broader than my leadership role in adult religious education, interest in ministry grew from this experience, and I began to consider ministry as an alternate career.

I recognized that both ministry and educational administration invited similar skills and satisfactions. In the school, my leadership focus had always been on adolescent development and adult development that augmented the growth of adolescents. In the church, my focus was primarily on adult development, providing support for clarifying personal meaning and for coping with life's challenges. Upon reflection, however, I wondered how one could develop adults and adolescents effectively in

schools without focusing on personal meaning and coping with life's challenges.

I felt pulled toward both the professions of ministry and education, and I had to make a choice. Which would be the "road not taken"?

I reflected upon both the role of the principal and the minister as I understood them. I conceived the primary role of the principal to be the offering of leadership that enables the school to fulfill its mission: the care and development of children. This, in turn, insures the continued vitality of intellectual, commercial, political, and moral life for individuals, societies, and nations.

I conceived of a minister as a seeker like myself, but one who had developed a steady discipline and deepened insight into concerns of "ultimacy" or, as one minister defined spirituality--"those things we don't deserve, can't explain, are grateful for or wish we had" (D. Heath-Bolton, personal communication, July 3, 1987). For almost twenty years, I have been a member of the Unitarian Church, a church that belongs to the liberal church tradition. My own view of ministry was conceived largely in response to my observations of the various roles of ministers in this denomination, although some traditional "priestly" roles from my Roman Catholic background have undoubtedly also influenced my view. Neither the "fire and brimstone" sermons of born-again Christians nor the Biblical

"inerrancy" of contemporary fundamentalists influence my theology or my view of ministry.

After much deliberation, I decided that my present profession would continue to remain a vital challenge, and, consequently, I chose to pursue a doctoral degree in educational administration in July, 1993. The road not taken would be ministry, or so I thought.

## The principal as minister

My interests in ministry and my experience in organizational leadership in my church became a springboard for thinking about the principalship in terms of ministry. I first publicly mentioned my interest in ministry when I presented myself as a candidate for the principalship. In response to the question "Why do you want to be a principal?", I found myself explaining to a deputy superintendent that I had considered becoming a minister and had concluded that the most significant ministry I could find would be in service to youth. I found myself explaining the meaning of the principalship in terms of ministry for the first time.

After the interview, I felt somewhat embarrassed that I had mentioned my interest in ministry. Had I come across as some sort of religious fanatic, I wondered? Would I be trusted to lead a public school now that I had disclosed myself as a religious person? Why had I disclosed this very private part of myself in a job interview, I asked myself?

Fortunately, I did become a principal of an urban public school in July, 1994, the year after I interviewed. The school was characterized by low test scores, high incidences of violence and discipline problems, high staff and administrator turnover, and a high percentage of disadvantaged youth. My response to the needs I envisioned in this school compelled me to see myself as a healer or, in my way of thinking, perhaps a minister.

Four days after I was promoted to the principalship of a public school, I left for a week-long vacation with my husband to attend a church-affiliated family summer camp, sponsored by the Lake Geneva Unitarian Universalist Summer Assembly. Having attended this camp for 10 years, I always look forward to browsing through a collection of books that the camp's volunteer coordinator gathers for the diverse tastes of the over six hundred attendees. I am never disappointed and attribute various milestones of personal growth over the years to the largesse of this "bookstore."

This year was no different. I settled down with Harvard religion scholar Diana Eck's book, Encountering God: A Spiritual Journey From Bozeman To Banaras. Once again the literature of ministry echoed with my own views of leadership. Eck (1993) points out that the Latin word credo means literally "I give my heart" (p. 195). The words "I believe" are problematic today, she says, in part because they almost suggest

uncertainty, akin to unscientific intellectual propositions rather than the stuff of faith and commitment.

Eck's ideas connected with the educational literature I had been studying in my doctoral program. For example, Sergiovanni (1992) criticizes management and leadership theory for overemphasizing logic, reason, scientific evidence, and bureaucratic authority. He argues that effective leadership must include moral dimensions, such as social bonds, altruism and values. Contrary to the view in management and motivation theory that human beings are by nature selfish, Etzioni (1988) purports that moral judgment guides individual decision-making more consistently than self-interest and pleasure. Moral authority is a powerful motivator, according to Etzioni, because people's beliefs and values count most to them. Thus, when Martin Luther King, Jr., a preeminent minister leader, proclaimed : "I have a dream," he elicited moral authority by espousing the need for equity and justice for all people. Underscoring the importance of moral leadership, Servant Leadership author Greenleaf (1977) reminds us that the great leader is one who stirs others to serve authentically.

When I returned from vacation, I continued to think about the applicability of ministerial themes in school administration. During the first year of my principalship in the public school system, 1994-95, as I reflected upon the nature of my work as a school principal, I was struck by Thomas Sergiovanni's (1992) observation that the Latin meaning of the

word "administration" is "to minister to." Perhaps, because of my personal interest in ministry, Sergiovanni's references to ministry, encountered in doctoral study of educational literature, served as a kind of epiphany for me and reinforced the germination of my own metaphor for leadership.

Thus, my leadership frame or lens has become the "principal as minister" because it deepens my understanding of my work in the school setting. I find congruence between my role as principal and some of the functions of ministry: healer, preacher, prophet, confessor, moral arbiter. In today's schools, I have found that leaders must be "healers," and there are daily opportunities to fulfill the pastoral, or supportive and nurturing, role of ministry. Upon further reflection, I also guessed that much of what I do as an educational leader is prophetic--to invite others to engage in the larger mission of service to community.

As I developed my principalship practice, I came to believe that the way educational leaders should set the direction for schools is by ministering to those they serve. As pastoral leaders, principals should provide support and caring to students, staff, and parents. Pastoral leaders provide care for the "soul." As prophetic leaders, principals should share their inner commitment to service for children and communities. Prophetic leaders provide a call to engagement and mission in the world. As a beginning principal, I used this "principal as minister" metaphor as a lens for understanding my experiences and interactions.

## Research questions

Throughout my first year as principal, new understandings arose as I continued to draw upon the metaphor of principal as minister. In the mode of the reflective practitioner (Schon, 1983), I began to pose questions, such as:

How is a principal like a minister?

How does the use of this metaphor affect my practice as a principal?

My daily routines would frequently be influenced by my view of myself as a "minister." In dealing with some staff and parent problems, I found the role of minister more accessible and useful than the role of principal.

The use of this metaphor in my practice remained private since my initial mentioning of it to the deputy superintendent. However, somewhat spontaneously, I mentioned it in the course of a discussion in my cohort doctoral study group, Reformus. This group had become a supportive and challenging professional development group in my doctoral study experience. They encouraged me to explore the "principal as minister" theme as did some of my professors. About a month later, I encountered an educator who is also an ordained minister. When I shared my interest in the "principal as minister" theme, he, too, encouraged me to explore this topic and explained that ministry had both pastoral (providing support and comfort) and prophetic (providing moral imperatives and challenges)

components, which were sometimes in conflict. His comments reinforced the notion that the principalship had parallel components with ministry, and his explanation of the pastoral and prophetic roles encouraged me to consider my study of the metaphor more deeply.

Hence, in searching for a topic on which to write my doctoral dissertation, I decided I wanted to explore the "principal as minister" theme. Writing such a dissertation would provide the opportunity to be reflective about my professional experience as a principal. Thus, I began a reflective study of my first year and a half as a principal to illuminate the fit between the role of a school principal and the role of a minister. I sought to discover how the metaphor of "principal as minister" affected my practice as a school principal. When I discovered Sergiovanni's (1996) observation in Leadership for the Schoolhouse that "the first roles of principals ... are ministerial ones" (p. 88), I felt affirmed that a noted scholar had publicly observed what I had privately discovered for myself.

Through my study, I explored exactly how I, as a principal, embodied my ministerial role in practice. Perhaps my reflections uncovering my own experience will shed light on the experience of others as well--principals and ministers.

## Purpose and significance of the study

Sergiovanni (1996) does not explicitly elucidate the principal as minister's role. He does, however, call for a different type of leadership,

developed from a study of educational practice rather than from corporate or business models. According to Sergiovanni (1996), existing theories fail to grasp the total reality of the school. He argues that, without new theories for school leadership, we will continue to create schools that mimic the factory and corporate models of organizational life. Such theories, he continues, are devoid of the singlemost important dimension for schools--the moral dimension:

> Schools are responsible for more than developing basic competence in students and passing on the culture of their society. They are also responsible for teaching habits of the mind and habits of the heart. Everything that happens in the schoolhouse has moral overtones that are virtually unmatched by other institutions in our society. (Sergiovanni, 1996, p. xii)

Sergiovanni points out that the theoretical constructs we use in understanding social institutions help to shape them. He argues that theory is important because it functions as a "mindscape that creates realities we use to make decisions about schooling" (Sergiovanni, 1996, p. xv). In search of a new leadership theory for the schoolhouse, Sergiovanni identifies characteristics that are important for such a theory:

> it should be aesthetic;
> its language and images should be beautiful;
> it should be consistent with the school's human purposes and conditions;
> it should emphasize moral connections;
> it should evoke sacred images;
> it should compel people to respond for internal rather than external reasons;
> it should respond to the nature of human rationality;
> it should acknowledge self-interest and the ability to rise above it;
> it should reflect constructivist teaching and learning principles;

> it should transform the school into a center of inquiry;
> it should encourage principals, teachers, parents and students to be self-managing, to accept responsibility, and to feel a sense of obligation and commitment to do the right thing. (1996, p.xv)

I heartily agree with Sergiovanni that a leadership theory that is not borrowed from the corporate world but, rather, from educational practice is warranted. Preliminary to developing such a theory, research which captures the actual experience of school leaders as they attempt to effect change can contribute to the development of such a theory. To do this, Blumberg (1980) encouraged case study research of individual practitioners. He notes that:

> ... the field of educational administration can also benefit from systematically collected empirical descriptions of the actual on-the-job behavior of school principals and superintendents .... (p. 266)

One way to develop such research, suggested Blumberg:

> ... might involve comparisons between the role of principals and the roles of administrators in other occupational settings. Which aspects of the role are similar and different across occupations? In what ways is the principalship role similar to and different from managerial and leadership roles in nursing, social work, medicine, civil service, business, government, and the military? (p.266)

My study clearly addresses both of these suggestions. It presents "empirical descriptions of actual behavior" and it compares the principalship with another leadership role, that of minister in a liberal church tradition. This self-study, using a reflective practitioner methodology, attempts to illuminate my actual experience as a principal while using the metaphor

"principal as minister" in practice. Therefore, the purpose of this study is two-fold: to explore the fit between the role of the principal and the role of the minister and to study how my leadership practice has been affected by my reflection on the "principal as minister" metaphor.

The experience of studying my own work provided an opportunity for personal and professional growth, and thereby will influence the direction of my own work in subsequent stages of my life and career. However, in addition to the personal significance of the study for me, there exists the potential for staff development of others. For example, Sparks-Langer and Colton (1991) believe that teachers' reflective work demonstrates the need for teachers to become "co-inquirers into the mysterious process of reflective professional thinking" (p. 43). They point out that first-year teachers lack the support necessary to move them out of novice level performance. In the same vein, reflective work for principals needs to begin, so that principals can be supported and nurtured, particularly in their beginning years. Such work can provide staff development opportunities that specifically address the needs of new principals and reflective practitioners. My study, in response to the recommendations of Sergiovanni (1996) and Blumberg (1980), may also contribute to leadership theories that fit the realities of the contemporary urban school.

# CHAPTER II

# REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

*Our work has taught us that the symbolic, expressive facets of organizational life are at the heart of inspired leadership...The signs point toward spirit and soul as the essence of leadership.*

*(Bolman, L. G. and Deal, T. E., 1995)*

## Introduction

Schools have the responsibility to help develop the resources that constitute our national character--our youth. On the national scene, former Secretary of Education William Bennett (1995) emphasizes the need for "virtue" in schools and families. Likewise, sociologist Amitai Etzioni (1988) calls for a new economic order based on moral authority. A review of the literature in educational administration reveals a growing awareness of the need for moral leadership in schools, paralleling the outcry for moral leadership nationally.

This literature review focuses on the emerging emphasis on moral leadership for school principals, the importance of reflection as a way to penetrate, understand, and tap the moral dimensions of professional practice, the power of metaphor in focusing such reflection, and the development of the "principal as minister" metaphor as a way to operationalize moral leadership practice in schools.

## The Principal as Moral Leader

In his recent work, Leadership for the Schoolhouse, Sergiovanni (1996) calls "for creating a new educational administration, with a new vision of leadership and a new theory for the school" (p. xix). He proposes that schools are best viewed as moral learning communities. Sergiovanni (1991) proposes that:

> ...the school must move beyond concerns for goals and roles to the task of building purposes into its structure and embodying these purposes in everything that it does with the effect of transforming school members from neutral participants to committed followers. The embodiment of purpose and the development of followership are inescapably moral. (p. 323)

James MacGregor Burns (1978), in his exploration of leadership theory, described two kinds of leadership: transactional and transformational. Burns describes transactional leadership as leadership that appeals to the social and ego needs of persons while transformational leadership focuses on the moral and self-actualizing dimension of human nature. Burns states that transformative leadership is more efficacious because it imbues both the leader and follower's aspirations, conduct, and performance with moral significance.

The first step in the development of moral leadership is the identification of core values. The establishment of core values and vision is a key focus in corporate leadership theory (Bennis and Nanus, 1985; Deal

and Peterson, 1990). Gardner (1986) concludes that leaders cannot lead unless there is a base of shared values. Peters and Waterman (1982, 1984) posit that attention to values is crucial for organizations to develop excellence. Sergiovanni (1984, 1992) observes that establishing core values is fundamental to establishing excellent schools and moral leadership. Likewise, Deal and Peterson (1990) find that a focused sense of values is a critical ingredient for successful principals that they studied. According to Gardner (1986), "A community lives in the minds of its members--in shared assumptions, beliefs, customs, ideas that give meaning, ideas that motivate" (p. 7). A synthesis of research on schools that are effective reveals an underlying vision and clear values guided these schools (Lieberman and Miller, 1981).

Part of the role of principal as moral leader, then, is to instill core values that reinforce the organization's purpose. Chester Barnard (1958) states that "The inculcation of belief in the real existence of a common purpose is an essential executive function" (p. 87). Similarly, Bolman and Deal (1992) emphasize the importance of the leader's ability to focus on meaning and purpose. Bolman and Deal identify four leadership frames that describe leadership practice: structural: emphasizes rationality, efficiency, planning, and policies; human resource: emphasizes facilitation, training, and empowerment; political: builds coalitions and networks to

develop a power base; and symbolic: emphasizes ritual, ceremony, meaning, story, and values.

While all four are important, according to Bolman and Deal, the symbolic frame is the best predictor of effective leadership. While the structural and political frame help develop managers, the symbolic frame develops leaders who can "get to the heart of issues of meaning and faith" (p.37). Bolman and Deal believe that "culture, soul and spirit are the wellsprings of high performance ... the signs are everywhere that late 20th century organizations are at a critical juncture because of a crisis of meaning and faith" (p.43-44).

According to Bolman and Deal (1992), symbolic leadership pays attention to the deeper issues of faith and purpose:

> ... team building at its heart is a spiritual undertaking. It is the creation of a community of believers, united by shared faith and shared culture. It is a search for the spirit within. Peak performance emerges as a team discovers its soul. (p. 44)

According to Bolman and Deal, ritual, symbolism, and ceremony build teams, the major foundation of modern organizations, by "reinforcing values, revitalizing spirit and bonding individuals to the team and to one another "(p. 41). Bolman and Deal emphasize not only the need for moral leadership but for leaders who are grounded in their own spirituality and can provide spiritual sustenance for others: "Every team needs a "priest"--a pastor who ministers to spiritual needs. Informally, these spiritual leaders take confession, give blessings, maintain traditions, and intercede in

matters of gravest importance" (p. 42). Likewise, Peter Vaill (1989) concludes that "all true leadership is indeed spiritual leadership..." (p. 233). In his study of high performing groups, Vaill concludes that spirit is at the core of every group and is essential to the meaning and value of a group's work.

In the same vein, Deal and Peterson (1990) conclude that important leadership functions of principals are cultural tasks that are expressive of moral, spiritual dimensions. These cultural tasks engage principals in "identifying heroic individuals, celebrating milestone events and accomplishments, and engaging in various expressive activities" (p. 9). Sergiovanni (1984) also values the cultural and symbolic roles of principals more than technical ones. He describes the importance of the principal's symbolic role as "the stirring of human consciousness, the integration and enhancing of meaning, the articulation of key cultural strands that identify the substance of a school, and the linking of persons involved in the school's activities" (p.8). Sergiovanni states that symbolic leadership engages the leader in managing "faith itself" (p. 105). He adds, "When principals are expressing symbolic aspects of leadership, they are typically working beneath the surface of events and activities; they are seeking to tap deeper meanings, deeper values" (p. 105). The tasks of symbolic leadership include "presiding over ceremonies, rituals, and other important occasions" (p. 7).

According to Sergiovanni, a principal's cultural role is accomplished by:

> ... articulating school purposes and mission; socializing new members to the culture; telling stories and maintaining or reinforcing myths, traditions, and beliefs; explaining "the way things operate around here"; developing and displaying a system of symbols over time; and rewarding those who reflect this culture. (1984, p.9)

Sergiovanni (1984) believes that cultural leadership often requires the principal to assume the role of "the high priest" (p.105). He describes the role of the principal as one who:

> ministers to the needs of the school and works to serve others so that they are better able to perform their responsibilities .... In addition to manager, minister, and servant the leader functions as a "high priest" by protecting the values of the school. (p.126)

Sergiovanni (1991) emphasizes that moral leadership is critical in our nation's schools today. The kind of leadership most needed in schools is one that builds a "shared covenant that bonds together leader and follower in a moral commitment" (p. 126).

Similarly, Beck (1994) argues that we must reclaim educational administration as a caring profession. She argues that

> ... if one believes that it is consistent with the nature of God or of persons to seek caring, nurturing interactions in all of life and if one explores the strong tradition for such interactions in education--she or he, it seems, would need to consider the possibility that caring should figure strongly in administrative thought and practice. (p. 37)

In Beck's view, educational theorists and practitioners have defined their purposes in response to political and cultural pressures rather than out of concern for the needs of students and teachers. Beck believes it is time for "educational administrators to claim the right to operate from a perspective that embraces caring and community building" (p. 2). Beck describes the following leadership tasks as prerequisites for the work of building moral communities:

> Reflection: developing a vision;
> Dialogue: assessing reality;
> Institutionalizing values: structuring opportunities to care;
> Learning: the core of administrative work;
> Pedagogy: a central administrative activity;
> Management: facilitating the instructional program;
> Supervision and evaluation: acting as professional colleague;
> Using metaphors: cultural currency of caring cultures;
> Storytelling: creating, sustaining, and developing values;
> Attending to meanings: interpreting acts and events;
> Participating in rituals and ceremonies: reinforcing and celebrating values (p. 185).

Likewise, Noddings (1984) identifies leadership tasks requisite for maintaining and enhancing caring in schools: "dialogue that includes 'spiritual responsiveness' and practice which engages students in caring apprenticeships and 'confirmation,' the attribution of caring motives to students and teachers" (p. 185).

Thus, to develop and nurture moral communities, a new kind of educational leader is needed. In the conclusion of his book, The Principalship, Sergiovanni (1991) sums up the moral leadership role of the principal by describing the principal as one who ministers to others:

> Principals are responsible for "ministering" to the needs of the schools they serve. The needs are defined by the shared values and purposes of the school's covenant. They minister by furnishing help and being of service to parents, teachers, and students. They minister by providing leadership in a way that encourages others to be leaders in their own right. They minister by highlighting and protecting the values of the school. The principal as minister is one who is devoted to a cause, mission, or set of ideas and accepts the duty and obligation to serve this cause .... When moral authority drives leadership practice, the principal is at the same time a leader of leaders, follower of ideas, minister of values, and servant to the followership. (p. 335)

If the leadership mindscape needed for contemporary schools is a moral one, how will such leaders emerge? What strategies will help to develop them and what models can they use to learn about moral leadership practice?

According to Beck (1994), Schon's (1983, 1987) work demonstrates that reflection in practitioners is a key characteristic of this new kind of moral leader. "In Schon's view, leaders who reflect upon their work, allowing instinct to inform and support logic, will be best able to visualize and move toward caring and effective organizational structures" (Beck, p. 80).

## The Reflective Practitioner

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in reflective practice as a means of professional development. As Brodkey (1993) points out, in the absence of systematic feedback which is rarely provided in the school setting, self-assessment and reflection become essential for

professional growth, particularly growth that leads to the development of moral leadership.

Reflective practice is a challenging, focused, and critical examination of one's own behavior in an effort to improve one's own craft. Thought is integrally linked with action. According to Osterman (1990):

> ... practitioners step back and examine their actions and the reasons for their actions. They reflect on the effectiveness or legitimacy of these action choices, and they use this new perception as a means of developing alternate strategies. Through this dialectic process of thought and action, the practitioner takes an active role in shaping his or her own professional growth. (p. 134)

Such terms as "reflection," "reflective teaching," and "reflective, inquiring professional" are now widely used in journal articles and at education conferences. This popularity indicates a shift away from emphasis on "mastery of technique and the learning of theoretical principles, and towards the promotion of analytical, reflective habits and attitudes in teaching" (Korthagen & Wubbels, 1991, p. 1).

The development of reflective habits in practitioners has been studied in the larger context of action research. The term "action research" describes the practice of disciplined inquiry by practitioners focused on improving the quality of schools and the performance of professionals (Calhoun, 1994). As early as the 1940's and 1950's, Lewin challenged the separation of research from action and advocated practitioner involvement in research study (Lewin & Lewin, 1948).

Corey (1953) was one of the first researchers to use action research in the field of education. He believes that if school practitioners, teachers, principals, and administrators would study their own work, professional practice as well as schools would improve. Likewise, Wood (1988) states that action research

> incorporates many of the qualities of an "ideal" staff development program. It is individualized and can be used by a teacher at any developmental level. It assumes teachers are knowledgeable and gives them power to make decisions. It can be carried out collaboratively. It is an on-going process and for that reason can be more effective than a typical one day in-service presentation. (pp. 148-9)

Renewed emphasis on action research in the local school has become a key change strategy in school reform. Current emphasis on decision-making and expertise at the local school requires that schools become centers of inquiry that perpetually renew themselves (Barth, 1990). Glickman (1985, 1993) promotes schoolwide action research as an ongoing strategy not only to construct new knowledge but also to improve performance.

In addition to action research, numerous strategies currently contribute to the development of reflection in practitioners: ethnography, writing, and reflection, supervision, and reflective teaching, and curriculum development and analysis (Zeichner, 1987). Narrative research is increasingly becoming a viable strategy for the development of reflective practice (Jalongo & Isenberg, 1996). Not only does the practitioner develop

reflective insight by constructing the story, but the narrative story and authentic experience of the practitioner add depth to the literature of professional practice. Jalongo and Isenberg (1996) recently demonstrated this interplay between narrative and action research in Teacher Stories, in which they use teacher narratives as the basis for action research:

> Human beings learn from the stories of others to the extent that a particular story causes them to think and reexamine their own experience. Our real audience, then, is anyone for whom these stories can become a tool for reflection and a stimulus to tell or write factual accounts of their own personal or professional lives that lead to deeper insights. (p. xxi)

King and Lonnquist (1992) value the importance of reflective study, a category of action research, because "detailed autobiographical narrative and personal reflection have ... a 'subjective generalizability' for other practitioners" (p. 3). A growing body of research examines the methods practitioners use to reflect on their work and how such reflection improves their performance.

Donald Schon (1987) observed that there is an assumption that the body of scientifically derived theory and skills one learns in professional schools is directly applicable to practice. He calls this theory-to-practice model the "technical rationality" model (p. 33). Schon (1987) argues that most problems practitioners face are characterized by ambiguity and uncertainty; practitioners, therefore, must invent solutions that are not directly indicated by the technical, rational model. He notes that "... the

problems of real-world practice do not present themselves as problems at all but as messy, indeterminate situations" (p.4). Therefore, Schon believes that the technical rational epistemology that requires practitioners to solve problems by "applying theory and technique derived from systemic, preferably scientific knowledge" (pp. 3-4) is not meaningful.

Instead, Schon proposes the use of the practitioners' ability to engage in intuitive reflection on their own practice, similar to artists' ability to develop aesthetic patterns without consciously directing their work. This ability is what Schon refers to as reflection-in-action. Later, practitioners can reflect on their practice and derive principles of practice that may have consistent value for future use. Schon refers to this process as reflection-on-action.

Schon does not deny the importance of professional values and norms that professional schools seek to inculcate in members. Nor does Schon deny the importance of professional bodies of knowledge--theories and techniques--in professional development. Instead, he challenges the assumption that these values, norms, theories, and techniques can be applied to practice in a technical, rational way. Rather than endorse "textbook" solutions, Schon proposes the model of reflective practice as the manner in which competent professionals actually function. According to this model, many of the problems professionals face are nonroutine, complex problems, causing them to use knowledge implicitly, that is, without

intermediate reasoning, to respond to the situation at hand. As professionals reflect-in-action on what they are doing and attend to "talkback" from the situation, reflective practitioners may try other solutions and assess their implications for the problem. They may reassess their original understanding of the problem, reframe it, and test it with another solution. This sequence of framing-experimentation-reframing continues until more satisfactory performance is reached. Schon (1983) states, "When someone reflects-in-action, he becomes a researcher in the practice context. He is not dependent on the categories of established theory and technique, but constructs a new theory of the unique case" (pp.68-9).

According to Killion and Todnem (1991), building on Schon's work, both reflection-in-action (reflection taking place in the midst of practice) and reflection-on-action (reflection taking place after an event) are essentially reactive in nature. However, reflection-for-action (reflection to guide future practice) is proactive because: "We undertake reflection, not so much to revisit the past or to become aware of the metacognitive process one is experiencing (both noble reasons in themselves), but to guide future action (the more practical purpose)" ( p. 15).

Van Manen (1977) concludes that there are four forms of reflection: reflection before action, reflection in action, thoughtful action in pedagogical situations, and reflection on action. Sparks-Langer and Colton (1991), in

their synthesis of research on teachers' reflective thinking, argue that three purposes or elements foster reflective thinking and practice. The cognitive element comprises the knowledge base needed in order to make good decisions. The critical element is concerned with issues of social justice and moral judgment. The narrative element, comprised of journals, discourse of events, conference reports, mentoring and self-interviewing, provides an opportunity to contextualize learning and construct its meaning. Sparks-Langer and Colton do not observe that these elements are hierarchical in nature but, rather, play significant roles in all aspects of reflective practice.

Reflection on practice is meaningful when it is applicable to the actual context of the practitioner's work. A key decision, then, is how to focus reflection so that it has substantive impact on practitioner performance. For reflective practitioners to use reflection to enhance the development of moral leadership, for example, they must discover ways to focus reflection purposefully. An understanding of the way metaphorical constructs impact thought and the way metaphor can be used to channel thought provides a basis for using metaphor to focus reflective work.

## The Use of Metaphor to Focus Reflection

Language is not neutral in the expression of ideas. It is a medium through which we interpret and understand experience. Therefore, as Bowers and Flinders (1990) point out, "the language of culture provides the shared set of preunderstandings that will guide the interpretations the

individual makes of new experiences; for the most part these preunderstandings will not be part of what the individual is explicitly aware of" (p. 32).

These understandings often take the form of metaphor. Metaphor, derived from the Greek word, "metaphora," which means "to carry over," is deeply rooted in the conceptualization and expression of thought. Metaphors are used to understand one thing in terms of something else. Metaphor provides a context for understanding new situations in terms of the familiar and imbuing the familiar with fresh perspective and revitalized meaning (Bowers and Flinders, 1990).

Bowers and Flinders identify three forms of metaphor that profoundly influence thought and culture. The first is analogic thinking, which involves comparisons between two domains of experience that are similar. Analogic thinking invites us to think of something *as if* it is like something else so consistently that the *as if* element is forgotten. Bowers and Flinders give examples, such as "time *becomes* money; the body, a machine; and change, progress" (p. 36). A second form of metaphor and a kind of analogic thinking is the generative metaphor, which *generates* a large conceptual framework for understanding and guiding new experience. Generative metaphors provide the basic framework for people's conceptual guidance system, according to Bowers and Flinders. Because they often unconsciously encode basic assumptions about reality, generative metaphors

actually shape and constitute our reality. Generative metaphors, such as "individualism," "science," "reason," "community," and "technology" fundamentally alter the way we see and interpret our experience. Finally, another form of metaphor is the iconic metaphor, word images derived from historical and cultural contexts, such as "competition," the meaning of which varies based on cultural and historical contexts.

Langer (1942) also refers to the role of "generative ideas" in the history of thought. "Generative" ideas provide the context wherein new "aha's" can arise:

> The limits of thought are not so much set from outside, by the fullness or poverty of experiences that meet the mind, as from within, by the power of conception, the wealth of formulative notions with which the mind meets experiences. Most new discoveries are suddenly-seen things that were always there. (p. 19)

Langer refers to the human brain not as the great transmitter but the great transformer, which changes experience through an interplay with the stream of symbols that constitute the human mind.

Metaphors have consistently defined the purposes and practices of the culture of schools. Commonly used metaphors, such as the factory, the hospital, the family, and the war zone, "shape the way problems and solutions are defined [and] shape perceptions about how roles and relationships should be defined in schools" (Schlechty & Joslin, p. 157). Mitchell and Tucker (1992) characterize schools as either frontier cultures or settlement communities. Consequently, leadership practices, program

priorities, and member behaviors differ in schools with distinctly different generative ideas.

Foster (1986) recommends that the scientific model of school administration be discarded in favor of "literature and literary criticism as a model for understanding the context of administration" (p. 28). The administrator as literary critic can view the school as a work of literature and use his role to critique its coherence, moral significance, and main characters, plot, and setting. "A literary model sees the history of administration and organization as a variety of texts being written, each of which encapsulates a different feature of leadership and change," concludes Foster (p. 201).

Since the power of metaphor to shape schools and leadership practice is clear, how can reflective practitioners use the power of metaphor to focus change in intentional ways? Walker (1995) describes the use of metaphor to guide reflection in an administrator preparation program at the California State University at Hayward. Students were asked to develop their own personal leadership story based upon their beliefs and attitudes; subsequently, using their personal story, students formulated a personal leadership metaphor that became an organizing device for their portfolios and leadership styles. Thus, the program at California State--Hayward incorporated writing and examining one's professional story as a viable strategy for reflective practice.

The complex tasks of practice are so deeply embedded in our everyday experiences that we are often unable to articulate what we know, the "tacit knowledge" Schon (1987) describes. Access to this knowledge is essential, however, in order to be able to examine it, learn from it, and improve it. According to Cooper (1986):

> One way to elicit tacit knowledge is through metaphor. Metaphors are like ministories that carry much information in condensed form. Metaphors provide us with a "felt sense" of ourselves and our schools, while pushing us to think more creatively. (p. 128)

Similarly, Vance, Whitford, and Joslin (1981) point out that metaphors "are one of the prime vehicles through which people try to communicate tacit understandings, vaguely understood events, and situations they perceive to be novel in their environment" (p. 8).

Therefore, the use of metaphor to focus reflection is a viable strategy for individual practitioners to undertake in an effort to make reflective work meaningful and substantive. It has potential as a strategy for focusing school leaders and principals on the moral dimensions of leadership. However, little research exists on the reflective practice of principals. In one study of successful principals, Leithwood and Stager (1986) conclude that highly effective principals are reflective.

To promote such reflection, Barth (1990) encourages teachers and principals to write reflectively about their practice because the actual context of their work is seldom visible to others. He notes that "large-scale

social science research is often dependent on huge sample sizes that tend to obscure the rich meaning of individual cases. A need exists for investigation of individual cases as well as the aggregate of cases" (p. 100).

Bartell (1990) describes one form of case study research on teachers in classrooms that embodies reflection in which a

> ... teacher acts as a participant observer in a field setting, recording events and reactions to events in the classroom, describing the actions as well as the context in which the events occurred. The data collected are rich, descriptive data, viewed from an insider's perspective and lending a degree of understanding which can be achieved in no other way. (p. 82)

Similarly, case study research that engages principals reflecting on and writing about their practice is needed. To illuminate such reflective work, the use of a personal metaphor for school leadership that taps the deeper meanings and significance of moral leadership would be useful. One such metaphor, gleaned from the personal experiences and values of this writer, is the "principal as minister." An examination of the similarities and differences between the roles of principals and of ministers and reflection on the use of this metaphor as a moral frame for leadership practice has potential as a viable strategy for meaningful reflective work. An exploration of key themes in the practice of ministry provides a basis for useful application of and reflection on the "principal as minister" metaphor.

## The Principal as Minister

Definitions of ministry vary widely:

> Any society in the midst of profound change finds it difficult to agree on definitions. Our society is no exception. The trouble we have in agreeing on a definition of the term "ministry" is similar to the trouble educators have had in defining the term "education". (Coll, 1991, p.107)

According to Webster, "minister" comes from the Latin word "minister," which means "servant" (Mish, 1993, p. 741). Servant Leadership author Robert Greenleaf (1977), in his exploration of leadership, notes that "the great leader is seen as servant first, and that simple fact is the key to his greatness" (p. 7). Since servanthood is fundamental to ministry, a review of the literature on ministerial practice may offer insight into leadership practice as well.

My model for ministerial leadership is derived from the liberal church tradition, both because it is the tradition to which I subscribe and because it is a fitting model for public school application due to its pluralistic focus. The liberal church tradition neither posits nor negates transcendent views of reality; its focus is on the moral, spiritual, and communal aspects of religion rather than on the contents of specific traditions, scriptures and beliefs. My review of the literature is limited to Western Judeo-Christian traditions because they participate in the same culture as American public education. Despite broad differences in customs, beliefs, and practices, both the traditional and liberal American church traditions are similar in the roles of ministers in their churches.

The literature on ministerial practice is sparse (Le Fevre and Schroeder, 1986). Because of the wide variety of religious traditions, focusing on common issues in the field is difficult. In many theological schools, the staff who supervise the field experience of candidates for ministerial practice are overworked and find little opportunity to publish, as Le Fevre and Schroeder observe:

> In many instances, substantial intellectual and professional distance exists between faculty persons in the field of theology, Bible and church history and faculty persons in the fields of homiletics, pastoral care, religious education and parish studies. The various faculty often have quite diverse scholarly interests, and they rarely give their coordinated attention to issues in the practice of ministry. (1986, p. v)

## The Pastoral and Prophetic Functions of Ministry

To provide guidance to theological students, Le Fevre and Schroeder focus on two key themes of ministerial practice: personal transformation, such as grief, divorce, physical, and psychological suffering; and social transformation, such as social justice, education, and community concerns.

These themes of ministry to the individual and to the larger community recur throughout the literature, even though the themes are labeled differently by various authors. Consistent with my frame of reference for ministerial leadership, these themes provide the focus for the lens through which I examine the "principal as minister" metaphor. The lens includes two key components: the pastoral and prophetic roles of ministry. Pastoral tasks comprise aspects of service to individuals,

primarily in the form of personal support to congregants through difficulties, such as illness, loss, personal problems, and other life events. A minister's prophetic role is manifested by service to the larger community, consisting of preaching and guiding the congregation in ethical and moral conduct in the community, particularly in issues of social justice. Though denominations vary in their emphasis on specific aspects of social justice, such as abortion, Western Judeo-Christian congregations largely agree on the importance of the church's responsibility to promote social justice and prophetic acts.

A classic view of the pastoral role is found in John T. McNeill's History of the Cure of Souls. McNeill (1951) begins his treatise on pastoral ministry with the Latin phrase *cura animarum*, "cure of souls," which identifies healing as the primary task of ministry. McNeill prioritizes the following basic functions of pastoral care: comforting the bereaved, encouraging the sick and afflicted, and giving moral support in the face of both depression and oppression. Likewise, Nouwen (1972) emphasizes the healing aspect of ministry, "How does healing take place? Many words, such as care and compassion, understanding and forgiveness, fellowship and community, have been used for the healing task of the Christian minister" (pp. 88-9). Nouwen points out that in the fulfillment of the pastoral role a minister helps others accept suffering so they understand it as part of the human condition. According to Nouwen, community is healed through the

mutuality of shared pain which, though not alleviated, leads to a deepening of hope and vision. Other authors describe the pastoral functions similarly. Clebsch and Jaekle (1967) describe four key functions of the pastoral ministry as healing, sustaining, guiding and reconciling.

James Luther Adams (1986) emphasizes the other vital role of ministry, the prophetic role, vital not only for the minister but for the congregation as well:

> The prophetic liberal church is the church in which all members share the common responsibility to attempt to foresee the consequences of human behavior (both individual and institutional), with the intention of making history in place of merely being pushed around by it. (p. 103)

A review of the literature on ministry reveals that these key themes, pastoral and prophetic, are manifest similarly across faith traditions, despite varied views of ontology, theology, and deity. Coll (1991) states that, while ministry attends to the suffering and pain of others, it is always at the service of justice and peace, often confronting, challenging, and prophesying. Thus, Coll recognizes both a prophetic and pastoral component of ministry.

Similarly, in a study undertaken to develop criteria for contemporary ministry, these same components of ministry appear, "... a generalized response has developed within the churches of North America that accents the pastoral care of the individual" (Schuller, Strommen, & Brekke, 1980, p. 6). The authors point out that counseling and crisis management

dominate the practice of pastoral ministry. They point out that the prophetic role of ministry calls for a radical stance of transforming society into more humane and just conditions.

Shelp and Sunderland (1985) conclude that the pastoral and prophetic roles of ministry are integrally related and inseparable:

> ... the church's ministry must integrate two concerns: (1) the pastoral response of care and compassion and (2) openness to questions of social justice raised by the dispossessed and disenfranchised. To labor assiduously to express care for those who suffer will be insufficient if such action masks a failure to address the underlying causes of their suffering. Prophetic pastoral ministry consists not of two types of actions, but of one ministry. (p. 21)

Similarly, Migliore (cited in Shelp & Sunderland, 1985) identifies advocacy for the poor and for justice as prophetic while love for the afflicted is pastoral: "A failure to hold the prophetic and pastoral ministries in unity results either in compassionless prophetic activism or in sentimental care-taking that lacks prophetic vision and commitment" (pp. 24-5).

The Danforth Study of Campus Ministries (cited in Stagg, 1976) describes ministry in four basic forms: priestly, pastoral, governance, and prophetic. Priestly is defined as "proclaiming the faith and its gospel and carrying out its ritual acts which affirm the central tenets of that faith" (pp. 180-181). Pastoral ministry is seen as that of "caring for souls." Governance describes the administrative role of the minister, and prophetic requires "judging the justice and humaneness of the social order and pointing to the changes required....The prophet's role includes calling all ministries to

judgement--priestly, pastoral, governance, and the prophetic itself" (pp. 180-181).

Hulme (1976) identifies a key theme in the literature--the conflict between the pastoral and the prophetic roles of the minister:

> ...we have had two opposing forces in American Christendom: one emphasized changing the individual whether by evangelical conversion or by a more sophisticated approach to mental and emotional peace, and the other emphasizing changing the structures of society for the promotion of social justice...the emphasis on saving souls--on ministry to the individual in his needs, without the prophetic emphasis, can lead to an attitude of adjusting to the ills of society rather than attempting to cure them. One is challenged to shape up to what is rather than to attempt to change it. On the other hand, the prophet's emphasis on attacking the injustice of society, without the priestly emphasis can lead to utopian illusions. (pp. 25-26)

Likewise, Shelp and Sunderland (1985) note the need for the two functions of ministry--the pastoral and the prophetic--to become integrated into a unified focus.

Thus, the pastoral and prophetic functions of ministry are conjoined in ministerial practice. Using the distinctions illuminated by R. Beal (personal communication, Feb. 9, 1996), the pastoral function primarily focuses on the individual and personal while the prophetic function focuses on the communal and institutional. Some of the ministerial tasks derived from the pastoral function as evidenced in the literature are enabling others, developing trust, affirming others, sharing self, healing others and managing conflict. Ministerial tasks derived from the prophetic function

include establishing vision, eliciting faith, admonishing others, establishing justice, and building community.

The Pedagogic and Priestly Functions of Ministry

A review of the literature discloses other important aspects of ministry as well. Carroll (1991) in his comprehensive overview of the key functions of ministry discusses not only the importance of pastoral and prophetic tasks but other ministerial functions. Carroll states that the primary purpose of the church is to provide meaning, belonging, and empowerment. To fulfill these primary functions of the church, Carroll states that the core tasks of ministry are: meaning interpretation, articulating the mission of the church; community formation, building organizational structures and relationships that express the church's identity; and supporting the congregation's public ministry, helping church members live as "Christ's body in the world" (p. 99).

According to Carroll, some of the specific skills requisite to fulfilling the task of meaning interpretation--preaching, designing and leading liturgy, teaching, counseling, organizational leadership -- are aimed at helping the congregation reflect on and interpret their lives individually and corporately.

The task of building community, according to Carroll, is related to that of meaning interpretation. Poling and Miller (1985) agree with Carroll that community formation is a key task of ministry. They suggest that

"when ministry begins to understand its center to be community formation ..., then ministry may become a model for secular professions in our day" (p. 21). Some of the key ministerial tasks for building community are conflict resolution, celebrating rituals and belonging and expressing caring and support.

Carroll explains that the task of empowering public ministry involves living out one's convictions in the world and engaging others in asserting the relevance of their faith in the context of their lives and society. Finally, Carroll identifies the importance of reflective leadership as one common requirement that pervades all three tasks: "... each requires the capacity to lead others in reflection" (p.111).

Embedded in Carroll's overview of ministry is an additional function of ministry -- teaching. Teaching is a predominant theme in ministerial practice and in the literature. The National Conference of Bishops (cited in Bessette, 1992) defined ministerial leadership as having three components: leadership, teaching, and pastoral care. Schner (1993) concludes that "the tasks of leadership are to be found in "worship, teaching and enabling" (p. 110). Modeling the community's values is an important aspect of teaching and pedagogy (R. Beal, personal communication, Jan. 5, 1996). The prophets, including Jesus, in the Judeo-Christian tradition were often referred to as "teachers." The Biblical concept of preaching stemmed from the Old Testament word "naba," meaning "prophecy" and the New

Testament word "didasko," meaning "to teach" (Hamilton, 1992). Hamilton, in his classic work on homiletics, noted that preaching and teaching are different aspects of the same function: "Obviously, arriving at a clear distinction between preaching and teaching is difficult, if a distinction does in fact exist...the use of *preaching* and *teaching* rightly characterizes the pulpit" (1992, p. 12).

Also embedded in Carroll's overview of ministry is the priestly function of ministry, comprised of celebrating rituals of community life and leading liturgy. The priestly task of meaning interpretation is to "break open the symbols of the tradition in such a way that they illumine the concrete and sometimes threatening issues of life, personal and social, in fresh and helpful ways" (Carroll, p. 100). Thus, the minister regularly embodies the community's mission and values through the use of language, symbols, rituals, rites, ceremonies, and stories of faith. To facilitate formation of community, the priestly function is essential. Some of the ministerial tasks derived from the priestly function include giving blessings, establishing rituals, and presiding and celebrating at community events.

Other Key Themes in Ministry

R. Beal (personal communication, Jan. 5, 1996) points out that even though development of community is central to the work of the church, the minister, while participating in this community, must also remain apart from it. The loneliness of the ministerial role is a function of the

requirement to model continually the ideals and values of the community. The importance of caring for the caregiver, therefore, is a recurrent theme in ministerial literature because ministry requires "one to be selfless, not concerned about taking care of one-self, but rather to be devoted to the care of others" (Harbaugh, 1992, p.ix). Additionally, there is "a tension between being the person that one is and fulfilling the role of the minister, which continues twenty-four hours a day" (R. Beal, personal communication, Jan. 5, 1996). Patton (1993) emphasizes the importance of the minister's ability to maintain a balance in caring and being cared for.

Another key theme in the literature on ministry is the traditional view of the ministerial "call." Anderson (1994) describes the complex process of the ministerial call:

> There are three primary moments of discernment on the way to ministry as a profession. The first centers around the initial sense of call to some form of ministry ... The second ... occurs when an individual begins to understand more clearly the demands of pastoral leadership and the expectations of public ministry ... In the third moment of discernment ..., an individual who has accepted and been approved for ministry seeks to match his or her habitus (an inner attitude formed from general spirituality) with the needs and expectations of a particular ministry context. (p. 235)

According to R. Beal, the call to ministry transforms an individual into a different level of self (personal communication, Jan. 5, 1996). Likewise, Shawchuch and Heuser (1993) indicate that "the call to a vocation of ministry encompasses all that we have and all that we are" (p. 67).

Self understanding, another related theme in the literature, is a critical personal characteristic of ministers; the responsibility to provide guidance to others requires an inner awareness of self. Patton (1993) draws upon the work of ethicist Nel Noddings (1984) in stating the importance of training candidates for ministry in qualities of self understanding:

> Noddings' emphasis on being aware of one's own involvement in what one does and the impossibility of evaluating thoughts and acts apart from the one who has them and does them is a central feature of what is best in the clinical pastoral paradigm. (p. 19)

Another key concern in contemporary ministry practice is the question of ministerial authority. Carroll (1991) points out that ministerial authority is derived from the authority of the sacred or the authority of expertise (p. 45). According to Carroll, in the humanistic model of ministry, "the leader is granted authority to lead because she or he is believed to protect, interpret, and represent the group's core values and beliefs and contribute to their realization" (p.43). In the transcendent model, authority is granted to scripture, to tradition, and to ministerial leaders because the community believes that "these authorities are grounded in God and God's purposes for the world" (p. 43).

Carroll, in answer to the question: What kind of expertise is needed by pastors if they are to function with authority?, draws on the work of Schon (1983, 1987) to promote reflective practice for ministry. "Clergy who

function as reflective leaders function with authority," states Carroll (p. 122). He continues:

> There is no one best way that can be applied in every ministry situation. Discovering how to respond involves a reflective act in which one incorporates a variety of resources and perspectives in an effort to be faithful to the church's calling. (p.128)

How does reflection affect ministry practice? Carroll explains that the individual minister draws upon his or her own faith constructs, knowledge of scripture, and reading of the specific situation to determine appropriate professional response. Carroll points out that personal perspectives

> ... do not move from theory to practice but are part of a reflective conversation with each ministry situation. It is not a matter of finding the one correct response, but rather of finding--in the midst of practice--a response that is faithful to one's understanding of the gospel and to the unique character and dynamics of the particular situation. (Carroll, p.151)

Carroll recommends several strategies for reflective practice in ministry: constructing one's personal narrative in which one describes one's characteristic way of framing one's role; reflection on the Christian story, scripture, and tradition; reflection on theories, models, and exemplars; and talkback from the situation. Pohly (1993) also recommends becoming "autobiograpical about oneself" as a way of theological reflection (p. 127). According to Coll (1991), telling one's story and listening and reflecting on the Christian story needs to come together through connections, reflections, and dialogue. She refers to this reflective process as the "movement that

impels us to action" (p. 61). Coll (1991) has used reflective practice in her work with ministry students through learning contracts, ministerial journals, case studies, critical incidents, feedback, and theological reflection to enable interns "to make important spiritual and theological connections with pastoral work" (p. 9).

The Principal as Minister--a Reflective Study.

The need for moral leadership in schools compels us to seek new models for school leadership. Principals for tomorrow's schools need to develop a personal theology that encompasses commitment to ethicality, equity, democracy, and social justice. The spirituality of the principalship requires a prophetic focus that transforms institutions through commitment to equitable opportunity and democratic process.

Blumberg (1980) has encouraged the study of alternate career models of leadership as a strategy for broadening the experience of educational administrators. Recently, Daresh and Playko have (1995) looked for such models in three alternative career fields: medicine, law, and the priesthood. The emphasis on reflection and moral awareness in the development of priests has led Daresh to find significant commonalities in the training of priests and of principals:

> While we believe all models offer something, our continuing sense that self-awareness of new roles may be the single most critical issue associated with effective preparation of educational administrators, we believe that further attention ought to be directed toward what takes place inside seminaries. Somewhat surprisingly, the preparation of Catholic priests may

> have many powerful implications for the improvement of administrator development .... (p. 37)

Daresh emphasizes the importance of reflection in the development of moral awareness, an essential characteristic of leaders for tomorrow's schools. Similarly, Carroll (1991) promotes reflective practice in the development of ministers. Thus, a self study, using reflection as a method for expanding such awareness by using the metaphorical frame of "principal as minister" adds to the literature of educational practice. Using the pastoral and prophetic themes dominant in the literature, the principal as minister metaphor purposefully focuses reflection for this reflective study. The emergent themes of the pedagogic and priestly functions and the related themes of the loneliness of the ministerial role, the importance of the ministerial call, and the pertinence of self understanding and reflection to ministerial practice illuminate the application of ministerial leadership to the school setting. This study provides authentic data comparing and contrasting the roles of the principal and the minister and provides new insight into the challenge and mission that beckon for a new kind of leadership in schools.

# CHAPTER III

# METHODOLOGY

*We are great weavers of tales, outdoing one another around the campfire to see which stories best capture our imaginations and the experiences of our lives.*

*Margaret Wheatley (1994)*

## Methodology

Margaret Wheatley (1994), author of Leadership and the New Science, reports that Nobel Prize winner Sir Peter Medawar observed that scientists build "explanatory structures, telling stories which are scrupulously tested to see if they are stories about real life" (p. 142). Wheatley continues: "I like this idea of story-tellers. It works well to describe all of us" (p.142).

The stories of my first year and a half as a public school principal comprised the data for this study. Telling these stories provided a rich opportunity for reflective practice for myself and, hopefully, for readers. A set of guiding questions focusing on the "principal as minister" metaphor framed my study. However, this reflective study required an interpretivist approach to understanding phenomena because my researchable problem was to uncover and illuminate the meaning of my experience:

> Partly because individual meanings cannot be predicted, interpretivists do not work with a totally preordinate research

> design. It is developed in process, as those meanings become understood. Questions frame studies, but the questions may change or be further elaborated upon while the study is being done as the interpretivist delves more deeply into understanding the meanings people make of events. However, a general question typically guides the endeavor. (McCutcheon and Jung, 1990, p. 149)

The guiding questions of this study were:

1. How is a principal like a minister?
    a. What ministerial tasks and responsibilities are evident in my work as a principal?
    b. How are the roles of a principal and a minister similar and how are they different?
    c. Are the pastoral and prophetic roles of a minister evident in data representing my practice?
2. How is my leadership practice affected by my reflection on the "principal as minister" metaphor?
    a. How does reflection enhance or alter my pastoral role? my prophetic role?
    b. What sources of data seem to be most influential in affecting my practice?
    c. When does the metaphor not work and why?
3. What are the implications of the principal as minister metaphor?

a. How might such reflection on ministerial themes in the principalship contribute to leadership theory for contemporary urban schools?

b. How might such reflection contribute to staff development?

## Data Sources and Analysis

The data for this dissertation were embedded in reconstructed stories of events that took place during my first year-and-a-half as principal. These stories were selected because they evoked the application of the "principal as minister" leadership metaphor at the time that they occurred. That is, during the events described in each story or very shortly thereafter, I recognized aspects of the metaphor in action. The stories were based on my personal reflections about events and recollections of my role and thought process during those events.

I selected stories or vignettes which evoked the principal as minister metaphor. Some stories are about critical events. Some contain what I view as decisive moments in my beginning experience as a principal. After I wrote each story, I asked key individuals in the school who witnessed the events to read them for accuracy. I also used additional data to inform the reconstruction of the stories. These included:

1. Documents I generated, during the year and a half, including a weekly staff newsletter I authored which includes a reflective

column, an events calendar, staff recognition, weekly priorities, and routine organizational communication.

2. Professional calendars--daily, weekly, monthly, annually--in which appointments, meetings, priorities were recorded. These calendars serve as abbreviated diaries of events and actions.
3. Other documents, such as memos, letters, and notes
4. I recorded additional data during the year in written form in an occasional journal and on audio tape in which I reflected on my practice at various points during 1994-95.

The process of analytic induction was the primary means by which the data were analyzed (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). This process involved the following four steps:

1. I searched the data for themes which either addressed the research questions or evoked the "principal as minister" metaphor, as demonstrated in critical incidents and events, interactions, decisions, my actions or inaction, and my reflections on those actions or inaction.
2. Subsequently, I marked items that addressed the research questions, grouped them in preliminary categories, and coded them (Miles and Huberman, 1994).
3. After coding the data as described, I explored the data to discover the relationships among the marked data.

4. Next, I examined patterns and themes and analyzed their alignment with the "principal as minister" metaphor. During this process, I looked for inconsistencies with the "principal as minister" metaphor and compared and contrasted the roles of the principal and the minister. In addition, I examined the impact of reflection on my practice and looked for new or related themes in patterns that emerged.

Finally, I synthesized the data and reported the findings in narrative form.

## Validity, Reliability and Generalizability

Constructs such as validity, reliability, and generalizability are applicable in qualitative research as well as quantitative research; however, they must be reconceptualized to fit the purpose of a qualitative study. Guba and Lincoln (1981) purport that data are internally valid when they are consistently found to be true in comparison with other data in the study. Guba and Lincoln define the credibility of the data compared and contrasted with other data as truth value. The truth value of this study was augmented by the following means:

- narrative data were compared to document information, such as weekly newsletters and calendars, for accuracy of time and sequence.

- when possible, key staff were asked to read narrative data that described events to confirm their accuracy.
- since my dissertation committee includes experts in educational leadership as well as ministry, this committee, in effect, served as an expert panel as they reviewed my data, both narrative and reflective, as well as my conclusions for logic of interpretation.

The participant-observer lens is often viewed as less objective than other types of research, leading to uncertainty as to the reliability of the data. Reflective study presents new challenges in methodology because no external measure exists to authenticate personal reflection on experience.

Recently, Donald Schon (1995) has called for "a new epistemology" that facilitates the development of a new scholarship based on action research and reflective practice. He has cautioned that if this new scholarship is expected to meet the criteria of the modern research university--knowledge that is testably valid, appropriately rigorous, technical, and rational--it may fail, unless a new epistemology supports the efforts of practitioners to generate models and constructs that "can be carried over, by reflective transfer, to new practice" (p. 34).

Likewise, Miles and Huberman (1994) observe that,
"Now scores of postpositivists are using naturalistic and phenomenological approaches. At the same time, an increasing number of interpretively

oriented ethnographers are using predesigned conceptual frames and instruments ... the lines between epistemologies have become blurred ..." (p.4-5).

My proposed study, like most ethnographic studies, is not experimental science in search of law, but, rather, interpretive science in search of meaning (Geertz, 1973). Therefore, since my endeavor is to reflect on the experience of the principalship, the perspective of the principal is central to the study. Consistent with Senge's (1990) maxim "form should follow function," a participant observer lens is the most appropriate research methodology to use for self-study.

The use of oneself as both researcher and subject has the potential for contaminating the data with researcher bias or becoming more autobiography than science. However, since the focus of the study was the actual experience of a first-year principal, the data were best captured and analyzed by myself with the following conditions:

- an independent reader reviewed my data and analysis and assisted me in conducting analytic induction of the themes and outcomes of the research.
- conversations with colleagues enabled me to fill in the gaps in cases in which my memory did not produce a complete record.
- review of appropriate documents helped to triangulate the data.

- key staff read my data for accuracy when possible.
- I have studied techniques in reflective journaling for over a decade that were helpful in the collection and analysis of the data (Progoff, 1975).

Generalizability in case study research is context-bound and restricted to one setting. Therefore, the exploration of one principal's experience does not, in itself, apply to other settings. Nevertheless, an accumulation of more case studies of principal experiences could lead to a meta-analysis of the themes and issues similar and different across settings, as suggested by Blumberg (1980). Also, Schon (1995) argues that reflection on practice can be applied or "generalized" to the future practice of the reflective practitioner.

## Delimitation of the Study

The primary limitation of this study is that the inquiry is a self-study and, therefore, limited to the point of view of the participant. The study is limited to one setting, my own school. Most of the data for this study were collected during the first-year of my principalship when I began to use the "principal as minister" metaphor to guide my leadership approach. Learning the principalship and, at the same time, collecting data about my experience as principal proved to be a challenging experience indeed. However, since I was attending doctoral level courses at the same time, the intensity of my first year as principal did not yield the time or even the

consciousness to reflect on or understand the experience. This is not unlike the conditions reported by Shelor (1988) when she moved from reflection as a full time doctoral student to full time resource teacher, trying to understand the same school in both roles.

Thus, my first year as principal was a time when acting on what I was confident I knew was more preferable than asking why I did what I did or what assumptions guided my practice. It was a time to plan, to act, and to decide. I had little time to reflect on the meaning of my experience. My first year as principal was a time, therefore, when my inner guide was the "principal as minister" in the context of the particular school setting and my leadership style. This study afforded me the opportunity to learn about how and why this metaphor sustained me.

This study is useful for my own practice because it affords me the opportunity to learn from my experience. An additional benefit has been the development of skills in reflective practice that are meaningful for continued use in my professional work. I hope that sharing my experience of my principalship may help others as well.

Margaret Wheatley makes this observation about discovery and learning in today's rapidly changing world:

> In our past explorations, the tradition was to discover something and then formulate it into answers and solutions that could be widely transferred. But now we are on a journey of mutual and simultaneous exploration. In my view, all we can expect from one another is new and interesting information. We can not expect answers. Solutions, as

> quantum reality teaches, are a temporary event, specific to content, developed through the relationship of persons and circumstances. (p. 151)

By undertaking this study, I came to understand better the temporary solutions of my practice as a principal in the context of my school.

# CHAPTER IV

# DATA: "STORIES" OF A BEGINNING PRINCIPAL

## The Call: Transition To Transformation

### Many Calls to Serve

I filed my application to become a principal in March, 1993, when I was in the third year of my assistant principalship at East School. I knew that the principal at East might leave and, to be in line for the job, I had to have an application on file. The "administrative culture" for becoming a principal in the Springfield school district, serving 93,000 students, was that the applicant was expected to accept a position in any of the district's schools. Applicants for administrative positions were expected to apply for elementary, middle, or high school level positions, put their application into a generic application pool, and wait for a call to interview at any of the schools in the district.

I felt somewhat tentative because I had been at East Middle School as assistant principal for three years and felt productive and effective. I had guided the school's professional development plan, worked alongside staff to strengthen morale and commitment, and helped to launch a bright new future for the school. I had written and obtained a grant from a national foundation to explore assessment and teacher reflective work, in which I was very interested. There was so much yet to do that, even

though I chose to position myself for a principalship should a desired opening occur, I really felt in no hurry to leave.

On the last day of school in June, 1994, at a closing day retreat, the principal at East told me that he had applied for a lateral transfer to another school. I was not totally surprised. I felt the move would be good for him. I felt confident that the faculty would select me for his successor.

Upon my return the following week from a conference related to the grant I had just received for the school, I received a call from the school-based committee of another school that was interviewing for a principalship. I was invited to come to an interview the next morning. I said "OK" but felt conflicted. I felt a lack of loyalty and deep sense of betrayal to the East school community with whom I had just played an active leadership role in a school retreat that I had initiated and organized. I felt that they were counting on me to return. I had asked for renewed commitment from them and here I was interviewing with another school. I felt like a hypocrite.

I did go to the interview. At the end of the interview, I was invited to say anything I wished to add. I noted that the interview process at times felt very uncomfortable. I left without explaining that I felt conflicted in interviewing because of my ties to East. The committee indicated that it would make its decision in the next few days.

The Call

The day after I interviewed at North, I was called to interview at yet another school, West Middle School. It was a school on the other side of town and "the other side of the tracks." I knew very little about the school except that its reputation was not a positive one. It was characterized by a high at-risk population and its attendance zones included some of the most poverty-stricken African American and poor white housing projects in the metropolitan area.

I had heard that the facility itself was inadequate. However, I knew not to turn down an interview, so I, happily, accepted the interview.

Meanwhile, I drove across town to West to "do my homework" before the interview. The drive was almost thirty minutes from my house, mostly expressways. I found myself reflecting on "quality of life" concerns that involved personal habits rather than professional goals. The drive did not easily afford the opportunity to do grocery shopping, visits to cleaners and banks, or routes for walking on the way home from work like my routine from East provided. This part of town was characterized largely by small retail stores and block after block of commercial strips.

When the endless strip of highway ended, I crawled along one of the most commercial arteries in the city, crowded primarily with car lots, pawn shops, and hardware stores, and noticeably missing art galleries, coffee

shops, trees, and human spaces. I finally turned onto Miller Lane, where the school was located. The school sat back off the road and was landscaped by trees and scrawny shrubs struggling to survive the summer heat. Adjacent to the school was Fairfield High School, a troubled high school, characterized by a high population of students from at risk environments, high incidences of violence, and low academic achievement.

I approached the entrance of the school. One of the custodians greeted me. As she spoke to me, she kept attempting to cover her teeth, which were rotted and decayed, so she appeared to speak through the palm of her hand. I told her that I was a candidate for the interview the next day and asked if I could walk through the building. She agreed and smiled a big smile.

When I was left alone, I felt almost sick. The atmosphere of the entranceway felt so sterile and neglected that I couldn't imagine happy, growing children and adults in this place. The ceiling tiles in the entranceway were stained and cracked with holes in them. The tile floor looked filthy, (I later discovered that glue continually seeped from underneath it, leaving a dirty, mottled appearance. The tile had not been properly installed initially but the district never corrected the problem). The lockers were a dingy beige, in need of paint and repair. I walked into the cafeteria and almost burst into tears. Here was the only communal room for the school, the place where assemblies would take place (I learned

later that the school held few assemblies, either because there was no energy to do it or because the students were so misbehaved). Here, also, was the only space for Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA) and public meetings. The students ate lunch in this unattractive room everyday.

Without a doubt, it was the most depressing place I had ever seen. The building was actually built as an elementary school, not a middle school, and had never been modified for its older occupants. This room, like everything in the school, had a makeshift appearance about it. An ugly, unpainted folding wall stood ajar, indicating that the room could be divided so that the stage area could be used separately. Most of the time the whole room was set up as the cafeteria in order to accommodate the middle school population. All of the walls displayed fading, chipped paint. Torn, bent, and ugly brown venetian blinds half hung across the windows. A vinyl folding wall that was locked and chained separated the stage from the cafeteria. The wall was the ugly beige that bespoke institutional efficiency with no regard for aesthetics or the spirit of children. Backstage was junkpile after junkpile of boxes, old books and clothes, and file cabinets, some broken and empty, others locked, all dusty. It had obviously not been used for programs for some time.

I learned that a drab little hole-in-the-wall office had been made in one of the off-stage wings. This was the attendance clerk's office because

the main office was too small to accommodate the clerk. When parents came to pick up their children at this school, they had to walk into the midst of a noisy, chaotic lunchroom to see the attendance clerk and sign their children in and out. I shuddered at the thought of this.

The library was a cluttered room of wall to wall stacks of books, old curriculum plans dating from 1975, and junk. Replicas of Rembrandts and a few other old dusty cultural paintings lined the shelves high above, hardly appealing for middle school aged children. There was nothing here to spark learning or curiosity--nothing at all.

"How long has this building been used as a middle school?" I asked the temporary plant operator. He told me that about eight years ago this building had been converted to a middle school when one school was closed and the students moved from an inner city location across the street from one of the most violent and drug-impacted projects in the city where many of the students still live. The present location was considered safer and pleased the white majority of families who attended the school in this section of town and who did not want their children bussed to the inner city location.

It was obvious that the facility was terribly inadequate and that no effort had been made to adapt it or "buff it up" for its new population. Classroom after classroom depicted the same aura of neglect: stained and broken ceiling tiles, dismal paint, no color anywhere except for beige.

Broken and dirty water fountains, once used for elementary school students, abandoned eyesores that communicated that no one cared enough either to replace or to remove them, stood idle--too low to the floor for use by middle school students. Doors led to broken elementary classroom bathrooms, again idle, used primarily as closets for teachers' storage, shoved in and around the old toilets. Because in former days there were working toilets in most classrooms, the current building had only one set of bathrooms for its entire population of over six hundred students. (Later on, I would never become accustomed to the stench that emanated from these bathrooms.) Corridors were empty of any graphics or humor; the gym was dismal--no mascot or colors were depicted. Several rooms had no windows and offered varying shades of paint and poor lighting.

The school's main office was narrow and tiny. There was no counter space for transactions. A chaotic pile of seemingly everything was strewn across the secretary's desk. The intercom room was disheveled with unkempt piles of papers, folders, dirty coffee cups, and junk. There was neglect evident everywhere in the building--except one place. The principal's office had attractive cherry furniture and a video player and television! It was not in keeping with the neglected theme of the rest of the building.

The plant operator escorted me across two parking lots to the Annex, the second floor corridor of the high school next door, where one third of the

middle school students from West were housed most of the day, except for lunch and related arts.[1] Because the elementary building could not accommodate the entire population, one third of the staff and students (the eighth grade) went to school apart from everyone else. The eighth grade annex, as it was called, was located in the back of a second floor corridor of the high school. Students had to cross two parking lots and walk up a flight of stairs to reach it. They were not allowed to use a main building entrance but instead were required to walk behind the gym along an uncovered path in the rain and the snow.

I thanked the plant operator for his time and the tour. I left the building with a knot in my stomach. I never knew that there was such a discrepancy in this district between resources in schools. It was evident that this school did not count--the neglected atmosphere of the facility made a strong statement. The school was located in a part of town and served students that had little political clout. I felt troubled and uneasy about the interview the next morning.

The Need for Community

The next morning I drove back for the interview. I took with me my portfolio, a compilation of my professional work that I had developed for entrance into the doctoral program. I had personalized my portfolio so that it would communicate more than the quality of my work. I wanted it to communicate myself as person. I wanted the committee to know exactly

what they would be getting if they chose to call me in the same way congregations choose a minister's philosophy, talents, and personal qualities.

I wondered how I would feel about the staff when I met them. A colleague that I respected a great deal, who had worked with me on a grant proposal at East, had also worked with the staff of this school on a grant application. Both East and West had received these grants for the upcoming year. This colleague had told me some time ago that she had decided to become an active participant in the West grant, rather than the East grant, because she "felt so sorry for them and they needed so much." She reported sincere admiration for the staff and regard for their uphill struggle. Similarly, another colleague, who had worked as a resource teacher for both East and West, had nothing but praise for the West staff. When I told her I was interviewing there, she reported tremendous regard for their work "with so little."

There were nine people on the interview committee. I felt immediate warmth and genuineness with these people. I had never felt that with any other interview committee so strongly except at East. My attitude was beginning to resolve toward a "what will be, will be" outlook. Because I felt in no hurry to leave East and because the principal might leave East and I would be a probable selection for principal there, I did not feel compelled to need this position at West. Consequently, I approached the interview from

a position of possibility and openness. I believed if it felt right, then it would be right. I came away from the interview feeling that we had communicated well. Whatever would be, will be, I said to myself.

The next morning I got the call from the district personnel director. West wanted me. I was stunned that the decision was made so quickly. I never anticipated that this offer would be made before I knew whether or not my principal at East was actually leaving. For the first time, the dreaded possibility that we might both leave East at the same time dawned on me. I felt terrible about that possible occurrence and expressed this to the personnel director. My initial reaction was that I should wait to see what was going to happen at East, since there was a possibility that East would be losing both administrators at once. I felt that I should not leave if the principal left so that the school would have some continuity in leadership.

The personnel director informed me the West staff had been through a lot and that I should not have interviewed if I did not want the job. He explained that whoever took the position at West would be the fifth principal in eight years. Because of constant turnover in administrative staff, he indicated that turning down this offer would be devastating to the staff. I told him I understood his position and would agree, in normal circumstances, but that I felt it was unprecedented for both administrators to be leaving East at the same time. It didn't seem to be a wise

management decision, I offered. The personnel director again reiterated that I was expected to accept the position at West.

Feeling conscientious about the East staff and program did not appear to be valued, I thought to myself. I felt confused. I felt a sense of guilt at leaving the East staff in a lurch but I told him that I would be happy to accept the job at West. He said that this was a good decision and that in several years, the East staff would hardly remember my name. "They are not your concern now. It's time to move on," he said. I accepted the position, feeling happy for being chosen, guilty for leaving a school community without any leadership (what would the parents and students at East think?), grief stricken at leaving the community with which I had just celebrated a retreat, and very fearful of all that I had heard about West school. When the personnel director told me that the East school was not my concern and that it was time to move on, I reflected that "community" wasn't valued in this process.

Answering the Call

The next day I met with the former acting principal of West, who had left the position for a central office job. (She had accepted the acting principalship at West as a reassignment from a former vocational school principalship. The work year of a middle school principal is 220 days. A vocational school principal's work year is 260 days.) She proved to be the guiding light of my first year, without whom I believe I could never have

succeeded. She told me that the school had had a succession of principals; I was the fifth in eight years. The present group of eighth graders had had a new principal every year. She would not have left, she emphasized, but for the fact of a new district policy that would not allow her to retain a 260-day work year as a middle school principal.

She had great hopes for the school. She had launched the new grant initiative there as I had at East; she also had applied for a Youth Services Center,[2] which was funded in January, 1994. Given the demographics of the West school--almost 70% low socio-economic, 15% learning and behavior disordered, and 10% severe enough to be self-contained in learning and behavior disordered programs, it was amazing that this school had not already received state funding for a Youth Service Center.

I investigated the background of West by talking with many district colleagues about the school. I learned that almost all the African American teachers were located in the annex until last year when the former principal reorganized the teams to more evenly achieve racial balance among the staff. Some staff turnover had occurred through retirements. Three staff members, however, were filing grievances that I would have to resolve. Most of the office staff lacked requisite skills to do quality work. Both counselors had only one year of experience each. Three of the four department heads were located on the same team in the annex, making the

leadership in the building unevenly distributed. There was a lot of lethargy among the staff.

On the other hand, there was a singular core of talented teachers and staff, particularly the counselors. Many of the staff at West were young and energetic. Part of the challenge would be to get others to join them.

The school had one of the highest suspension rates and the lowest test scores of any school in the district. In fact, a colleague who had great regard for the school faxed me the regrettable story from the Herald Newspaper which profiled the top ten and worst ten middle schools in the state. West was among the worst because of its lack of improvement in test scores.

In addition to meeting with the former principal, I spent my first day as principal at the central office going through personnel files in an effort to select an assistant principal and plant operator. I had a very definite candidate in mind for assistant principal. I had seen the list of candidates available. The candidate who I wanted was strong in instruction and had had a lot of training in school reform because she had been working in a school that had been undergoing a reform process with funding from a national foundation. I was worried that because I was a female principal, the staff would feel compelled to have a male assistant principal. All the best male candidates had already been hired. No other middle or high school administrative team, however, was all female. I was concerned that

I might not be able to get the best candidate because of gender bias or because of the legitimate need to have a diversified administrative team. At West, because there was an excellent male counselor, Irv, I felt we could have a good gender balance and still pick a female assistant principal, if she proved to be the best candidate.

I called Laura, the Participatory Management Committee chair, to ask her to contact the interview committee and set up the interviews for the next day. I lined up the candidates at specified times. Laura said: "Do you remember me from the interview?" I admitted that I did not. "How could you miss me?" she laughed. "I was the blonde sitting right next to you." Her friendliness and need for recognition soothed my spirits. She came across so enthusiastically and warmly. I felt grateful and honored. I reflected that, despite all the negative things that had happened to me, here was one bright spot. This young, bright, enthusiastic teacher was telling me on the phone how happy they were that I accepted the position and how excited they were that I was coming to West. "Nobody ever wants to come to West," she said. "We are just so excited that you chose to come. We have had problems with administrators in the past as you probably know. This is the first time that we've actually gotten to choose someone we wanted, " she reiterated.

I felt humbled and chagrined at her remark. She sensitized me to the fact that there was a group of hopeful, committed professionals awaiting

my arrival to bring about change and to give them hope and promise. I felt so torn and broken from the experience of leaving East that I had not made room for the positive feelings of these people. For the first time, I felt good about the future. Underneath the feverish schedule I was maintaining to keep the interviewing on track, I felt comforted by Laura's words.

At a party that took place that evening, congratulations were extolled. When I expressed to the former deputy superintendent the loss I felt in not being able to see the grant on performance assessment at East come to fruition, he assured me that it was unimportant. He predicted that the important work was at West. "Just think," he said. "You'll be able to take them from nothing to something. This could be a great opportunity for you!"

For the first time, I felt a glimmer of light in what seemed to be a kind of nightmare. Though my spirits were heavy rather than exuberant, I had a sense that things just might change for the better.

Ministry Begins

I arrived at the school building for the first time as principal the next day, the day after accepting the position. I went to what was supposed to be the library but looked like a cluttered attic. I laid out papers for the interview committee and focused on the organizational structure of the interviews. We had six candidates to interview for assistant principal. I had my first choice, but could accept one other. I did not know any of the

other candidates. I knew that this position was key. I needed a strong partner to help me with this school. I felt a little desperate. What if the committee picked someone I could not work with? That's all I needed on top of everything, I thought.

Laura was one of the first members of the committee to arrive. I liked her immediately. She was an attractive blonde, an exceptionally bright young woman who was eager to discuss teaching and learning. Then, Sandy arrived. The former principal had told me that she had real talent in working with others. She smiled and was also very friendly. I next met Betty, who beamed warmly and then said, in a sarcastic way, that they could not believe I had really come. She told me she heard that East was upset that I left and wondered if I really wanted to be at West. I wondered what she had heard. At first, I was taken aback by her directness and sarcasm, although the sarcasm seemed friendly not biting. I assured her that I wanted to be at West and that the East teachers were upset because they had lost both a principal and an assistant principal. "So have we," reminded Betty. Although I felt put on the spot, I appreciated Betty's quality of frankness. As I stood there before these three teacher leaders, I realized that they were the people my colleagues had told me they respected so much. I realized that they had been through far more than I because they had had a traumatic experience with administrators for the past three years. Under one principal the staff became very divisive. The last

principal, after making some tough and necessary changes, left to go to Central Office. I knew there was some distrust of administrators because of this history. Still, I felt honor and compassion to be asked to work with them. I wanted to come through for them. "Yes, Betty, I want to be here," I said, feeling more authentic than the last time I said it.

When the first candidate arrived, I introduced the candidate, and we asked the questions that we had created right before the interview. I, however, purposefully created an informal atmosphere to put the candidates at ease. I felt that I interviewed best under those conditions and that the candidates would do best if we were friendly. The committee responded with humor and warmth, just as they had with me. We got cokes for the candidates, did not worry about protocol excessively, and enjoyed ourselves.

The candidate whom I wanted as assistant principal interviewed very well. My second choice did not interview as well. Interestingly, the gender issue never came up. Even though West was a very tough school, the committee readily agreed that what we needed was an instructional administrator. Without much discussion or disagreement, they chose the candidate of my choice.

We quickly came to consensus on our choice of a plant operator. When we finished, we chatted and laughed. My leadership style was to be genuine and real. I felt that I needed consciously not to come across as "the administrator" to these teacher leaders. I wanted them to see me as a team

member. I sensed that they, like me, were hiding some painful feelings. I wanted to take care of them.

I felt excited and ready. I called my new partner, Mary, and offered her the job. She said yes. I called Sam, our choice for plant operator. He said yes. I was building a team--the team I wanted. I reflected on the ease with which we had made these decisions. They had really come through. I felt grateful and blessed. Me, blessed after all I had been through!

An Inner Call

After the interviews were over, Irv, the male counselor, jokingly turned over a set of security alarm keys to me and said: "Take the anxiety of all this responsibility from me. I'm the senior administrator here, and I'm only one year old!" he laughed.

His comment proved to be an accurate reflection of so much need for training and guidance at this school. Later, the office staff proved willing to do the job, but inefficiency and error were characteristic of the daily operations of the school.

All this I had to look forward to and did not yet know. What I did sense was that the people here seemed ready and willing to do a good job for kids. They mentioned the kids frequently in their conversations to me. I sensed a school with a big heart despite what it looked like.

Irv took me over to the annex office at my request to show me the operation over there. He gently said he did not know if I could do anything

about it, but anything would be better than what they had. We entered a classroom that had been converted into an office by makeshift walls comprised of pieces of wood standing on end. Two were varnished unevenly. The counselor's office was in one corner and the assistant principal's was in the other. Irv explained that everyone could hear everyone else, so, while he might be counseling a sensitive boy about his sexual feelings, the assistant principal might be dealing with loud and angry parents, and other students and parents would be sitting along the wall across from the desk where the clerk took phone calls. Since there was only one phone line connecting the annex to the rest of the school, sometimes messages were conveyed over the intercom contributing to the hubbub in the office. "Irv! Irv! Can you hear me?" the intercom would boom and then a voice would proceed to shout the message, confidentiality notwithstanding, across the room.

My eyes misted over. I felt overwhelming sympathy for this community. I also felt a rage for the injustice of the conditions here. For the first time, I had a sense of being called here to make a difference. Here stood a bright, intelligent young man, gifted and talented in his work with kids, working in desperate conditions to make a difference for kids. Couldn't I help somehow? Wouldn't this work be truly a calling?

I reached home and happily told my husband about the day. He had been my solid support throughout my ordeal. He said: "I'm happy for you,

you poor thing." He wasn't excited as I was because he felt sorry for me, but he was relieved that my spirits were improving.

Vacation

I left for a planned one-week vacation out of town with my husband. Walking by a lake, spending time with friends and spending time away from the pressure of school life, I tried to see what had happened in the light of "what was meant to be." I understood that the school to which I was being called needed help far more than did East, which had become a magnet school with a future of lots of resources, relatively speaking. However, my husband concluded that "I was being given military treatment; first, I was given a promotion and then I was sent on a suicide mission." I recognized that the staff at West had been through a lot of turmoil and needed someone who could understand them. The students there were ones that had few enrichments in life; making this school as a beacon of hope for them would be a worthy and meaningful endeavor, I reflected.

When the week ended, I was still anxious though less so. However, I felt an overwhelming grief that I could not explain. Perhaps the recent loss of my mother played a part in feeling disconnected and uprooted when I needed so desperately to feel connected and part of "family." But the sense of loss I had seemed more than personal. Granted I would miss particular people at East; however, I knew that people that one cared for were those one stayed connected with. I felt I was still in the midst of important work

at East that I cared about but had to leave to someone else to finish. Here I stood, grieving the loss of a future I had helped realize but would never be part of.

A Road Not Taken

When I returned from my vacation, there were 19 phone messages from staff at East expressing hurt, congratulations, and "we're going to miss you" farewells. I began to feel broken up all over again. I returned the calls and painfully explained that the awkward circumstances of my leaving were unfortunate. I certainly had no intention of leaving them in the lurch, I explained. I still had feelings of guilt and a sense of the betrayal they might feel at both leaders abandoning them. I conveyed my best wishes to them and expressed gratitude for our time together. I said goodbye on the telephone....

About two weeks after I had taken the position at West while I was still on vacation, an East friend invited me to a farewell party. I was in trepidation, grateful but worried about my confused state and anguish spoiling the fun. A surprise limousine showed up at the house to take me and my husband to the party. We drank champagne the whole way there, which helped put me in a more festive mood. The turnout was small. Typically, it is very difficult to get teachers together in the summer. Actually, the lack of presence of throngs of staff "missing me" brought back the words of the personnel director: "It's time for you to move on. You're not

responsible for them. A couple of years from now, they'll say 'Remember that assistant principal who was so good, what was her name?'" I felt a sense of disappointment that I didn't get to say goodbye to everybody, but also I felt relieved that both I and they would go on and everything would be just fine.

The Call to Heal

When vacation was over and I came to West to work, I felt the need to be healed. The former principal met with me one final time to review final procedures. We walked to the door, and she showed me how to turn the security alarm off and on and how to lock and unlock the front door. This was a significant moment, one we both dreaded and anticipated for different reasons. She handed me the keys and looked straight into my eyes, knowing the gravity of the moment. She reported relief, but, thoughtfully, said: "Remember, I would have stayed" because she sensed my ambivalence and heaviness.

For a moment I stood there watching her crossing the parking lot. I hardly knew anyone here. I went back into the building and walked the halls. I began to envision color and repairs. I began to wonder what I could do here. Then I would be revisited by the awful desolation that pervaded this building again. I remembered Irv's plea--"We'd appreciate anything you could do. Anything would be better than this." How could I make a difference, I wondered?

The Call Becomes a Mission

Several days later, I went to see the superintendent. I decided that I alone could not turn this program around. I asked him to either close the school or do something about this situation. I meant what I said. I did not care about the protocol of a brand new principal making this demand. I felt that I was asking for justice. I was close to tears. He knew I meant what I said. He assured me that he shared my feelings and that he was investigating the possibility of a new building. In the meantime, he told me to call on the Director of Facilities, who would help me in the short term.

I went to see the Director of Facilities with the Middle School Advocate, who was a wonderful support person to me. She listened and coached me on how to obtain what I needed. Together, we asked for a new building and some short term repairs. I was asked to write up my requests. Verbally, I was told that "they'd see what they could do." I sensed that the Advocate worked quietly behind the scenes to attend to my requests.

I spent the next two weeks learning the ropes of scheduling and central office paperwork and structure. The business of the school was overwhelming in a bureaucracy as large as this school system. I set up appointments with every staff member and spent time just talking with them individually. All of them expressed the pain of being brought to this place, of being abandoned by the district and principal after principal. They seemed to want desperately for someone to believe in them.

A staff member's son who was an eight grader who attended the school asked to interview with me. This student was very intelligent and articulate, one of the shining stars of the school. He told me that many of the students lacked decent home lives and, therefore, "didn't know how to act." His mother told me the next day that, when his friends, who were students at West, came over to their house that night, they asked her son about me. Then they said, "Why doesn't anyone like us?" I asked her what they meant by this. She said, "You know. They wonder, why do principals only stay for one year?"

Rites of Passage

It was August 23. I was confident that no one at West knew it was my birthday. At East, we always celebrated birthdays, but I was so busy I didn't even think about it. At lunch time, the office staff invited me into the cafeteria. Much to my surprise, there was a pot luck lunch that was created by my key friends from East and my new ones from West. It was a perfect catharsis for healing. The surprise event was the arrival of a person in an ape costume who performed a mock strip dance! Everyone at West came to see how I would react to the stripper. They had had no fun with an administrator for a long, long time. It was a good way to begin healing for all of us. I laughed (although I did feel a bit uncomfortable); they laughed; my East friends laughed; we all began to laugh again.

The Call Transforms Me

As the summer passed and the school year approached, I felt that a visual difference in the present building was critical to signaling "a new day." The requests that I had made for facilities improvement finally began to come to fruition.

With the help of our Food Service Corporation, a separate cost center that worked with school cafeterias, I was able to get an artist to paint that awful vinyl stage wall into an imaginative mural featuring the Wildcat, our mascot. I got the cafeteria painted bright white, drab partition and all. Then I arranged for it to be striped in the school colors, and I had the broken venetian blinds removed and colorful new window shades and awnings installed. The stained ceiling was painted, camouflaging the old and broken ceiling tile. Sam, the plant operator, and I cleaned out the backstage area by throwing the junk away.

One day in late October, Ron, the Director of Facilities, arrived. Ron was the key person that the superintendent had told me to ask for help. Ron had never said for sure exactly what he would do for our building. He had just said he would "see what he could do." The word on the street was that if Ron liked you, you got help for your building; if he didn't, you got nothing. I told Mary, who is very attractive, to put on her lipstick and go out and schmooze Ron. I joined her. Together, we flattered, cajoled, batted

our eyes--whatever we needed to do to gain Ron's favor. This was, of course, done in a jesting manner. I liked Ron. I sensed an ally. He had shared with me that he had been raised in a poor remote area of West Virginia. I reminded him that our kids came from the same background. I believed that he would help us.

"If there's one thing we really need, Ron, it's the renovation of the annex office," I begged.

"To get that done, you got to get the principal next door to agree," he challenged.

"OK," I promised, thinking that it was rather unfair to put me in this position. Since my program was in the high school principal's building, I was put in the position of begging for everything I needed.

Heretofore, relations between the two schools had not been good. The high school saw the middle school as an interloper. The behavior of the middle school students invited criticism and rejection. Happily, I had a professional friendship with the high school principal. I successfully negotiated with my friend to "allow" the renovation of the annex office.

I knew Ron would be impressed because no one else had been able to get the high school to agree. Ron came through. In mid November, unannounced, the carpenters showed up to renovate the annex office. The site supervisor was right behind them. He brought out a set of plans that I

quickly approved. They told me to have the room cleared out by the end of the day. They promised to have the entire job done within four days.

I asked the annex staff, Sam and his staff, and the administrators to help move furniture. Happily, they sprang into action. They moved file cabinets and desks and quickly set up a temporary office in a storage room.

Within four days, the annex office had walls, doors, and 1990 mauve and grey colors. It was beautiful. I remembered Irv's supplication: "We would appreciate anything you could do." I felt a deep sense of accomplishment and gratitude to Ron and others who were helping to create a future for this school. I thrived on their support.

Meanwhile, I began having conversations with the librarian from the time I arrived that we needed to redesign the library and that I would help him. In mid-October, the Director of Libraries came out to talk with me. He concurred with my assessment that the library needed to be cleaned up. The Director of Libraries developed a plan that involved weeding the stacks and rearranging and resizing the stacks to create a more open room. Weekly, I checked on the librarian's progress in implementing this plan. One day I jokingly gave him a quota of two boxes a week that needed to be thrown out because I saw no progress. He responded laughingly, "How about four boxes?"

Then, one day, the librarian left and called in sick, and I never saw him again. He attributed his long-term absence to the need to care for his

sick parents. He took a long-term medical leave and did not return. This vacancy allowed me to get a substitute librarian and really make a visual change in the school.

The endless stacks of junk in the library were gone by December. The shelves were cut down with Central Office personnel help. Our substitute librarian weeded the collection. A new paint job in school colors with new white shades made the room spacious and pleasant for faculty meetings and guests and, most importantly, for students. The substitute librarian refinished all the library tables on his own initiative. At Christmas time, a symbolic event was sponsored in the library. Our substitute librarian and a central office librarian read holiday stories to classes, and I provided apple cider. The teachers and students were grateful for this experience. For the first time, in a long, long time, the school had a library and a library program.

Right after holiday break, the West office was renovated, another of my requests. Beautiful new desk cabinetry specially made for us arrived and was installed. No longer was everything strewn across the secretary's desk because there was more space to organize materials. In addition, a sliding glass window was installed to allow the attendance clerk to check students in and out from the office area, eliminating the need for parents to enter the cafeteria to pick up their children.

The teachers made grateful comments about the new changes. Betty was especially appreciative of the new changes. She would tell me over and over again how used they were to being second rate. They just figured nobody really cared about the kids here. She was effusive in her gratitude.

I felt bolstered and encouraged by all the help and support that was coming to the school. Granted these were conditions that should never been allowed to happen. But being in a role to turn it around was satisfying in a way that I realized being at East would never have matched.

I also began to collaborate on many levels with the high school next door, another advantage I would not have had at East. We began hiring high school students to work in our after school program. The editor of the high school newspaper helped our students produce a newspaper. I helped the high school develop rapport with the state liaison for Youth Service Centers, so that the high school, along with my school, would be positioned to get a Youth Service Center. The high school in turn granted every request I made--for space, for use of the gym, and for use of the auditorium. We began to help one another.

In April, when the Board passed Bond # 9, which authorized the construction of a new building for West at a site nearby within two years, I felt affirmed and called in a deeper way. The entire community had heard the call to help this school community. I felt proud to be a part of this work. The school board endorsement was the ultimate statement that the

staff needed. There was a new sense of pride at this school and a call to "to believe" again in its purpose. I was honored to be part of bringing faith and hope to this community.

## Building Community: The "A" Team

### Modeling Best Practice

The Springfield School District operates a surplus warehouse of furniture and equipment which schools can request. In my second week as principal, I arranged for the Plant Operator, the eighth grade counselor, and a sixth grade teacher (who offered to use his brand new truck) to pick up a new desk for the attendance clerk through the surplus warehouse. At 10:30 a.m., my staff and I were to meet the Director of Surplus at a school across town where the desk was stored.

Earlier that morning, I received a call from Boston from the person responsible for training my staff to implement a significant grant project. This call was expected and became a conference call with a third party before the discussion ended. The call lasted longer than I anticipated and delayed me in leaving to obtain the desk for the attendance clerk. I told my staff to go on without me after noticing that we had already missed our appointed time to rendezvous with the Director of Surplus. Shortly after they left, the Director of Surplus called and angrily said: "I was there, Where were you"? He reported that he had already left the rendezvous point. My second week on the job and I felt I had failed to obtain something

as simple and essential as a desk for a staff member! Essentially, by being late, I had lost the desk and would have to mend fences to get anything from Surplus in the future.

I was getting my apology ready for my staff when the eighth grade counselor called. I apologized for delaying the group, who, I guessed, must be frustrated because there was no one there to meet them or let them in the building.

"What do you mean?" said the counselor. "I'm sitting at the desk right now!"

"What?" I asked confused.

Irv, the counselor, explained that the Plant Operator had a master set of keys to all district buildings because he had been a trainee some months ago. He had not turned the keys back in yet, so my staff had access to the building without the help of the Director of Surplus!

"So, you broke in?" I asked, astonished.

"Well, not exactly. We had the keys, sort of legitimately. We did trigger the security alarm though. We called and explained what was going on."

I laughed aloud, wondering to myself exactly how they explained what was going on. "This is great! I definitely know who to send when I need something done!" I laughed. Even though I worried about the

propriety of my staff breaking into the building, I kept that concern to myself. I admired their ingenuity.

The counselor explained that the purpose of the call was that they needed help getting the desk back to school. They could transport the large section of the desk but a smaller section wouldn't fit in the truck.

"I'll be right there," I explained, aware that by allowing the phone call to delay me, I appeared to have not planned well. I needed to reestablish my credibility with my staff by being efficient and in control in finishing our objective.

"Come on," I said to the assistant principal. "Let's go help transport the desk." We both jumped into my Mercury Tracer, which I desperately hoped was big enough to transport the smaller section of the desk. Nobody had trained me in the skills needed to transport furniture; it was one of the many tasks I had not been prepared to undertake as a principal.

Upon arrival at the scene, I was greeted by a smiling group who could not wait to show me their treasures. They took me inside the building. They gloated about how easy it was to break into the building. Then they toured with me through three floors of furniture and equipment. There were file cabinets, bookcases, chairs and tables, partitions--treasures that school staff never have in sufficient supply. Interestingly, anything my staff wanted they had tagged with my name as follows: "West Middle School--Jan Calvert". Though I felt embarrassed that I would be viewed by

Central Office as the greediest principal in the District, I felt the need to support my staff in their wishes. I sensed that they felt empowered to take initiative because, as I walked through the building, they had used my authority quite freely--my name was on everything!

"You guys are vultures," I said. "Talk about greedy. Why don't we just hook up the building to the truck and take the whole thing!" I quipped.

They proceeded to get very excited about their finds. I knew that the Director of Surplus was already angry and wistfully felt that we would get little or none of this property. Nevertheless, I allowed them their dream. However, when I saw that they had actually taken five swivel office chairs in perfect condition and put them on the truck, I realized that they had overstepped their authority and misused mine. I modeled appropriate procedure: "I'm going to call to see if we have permission to take these chairs," I announced.

The Director did give me the chairs but explained that most of the equipment had already been promised to others. I mentioned to the staff that the Director indicated that some of the property had been promised to others, so that they would not be too disappointed when they received very little.

Communion With the "A" Team

After eyeing the smaller portion of the desk, I believed that it would fit in my car. I gave my trunk keys to the assistant principal and told her

to open the trunk. The back of the hatchback raised up and, with all three male staff looking on, the female assistant principal turned red and sheepish at its exposed contents.

Several days earlier I had purchased nearly the entire female hygiene section of Walgreen's drugstore, consisting of fifteen very large, generic-brand-with-nurse-on-the-cover, hospital-size bags of sanitary napkins, and put them in my trunk. It was my practice to do this several times a year to save time, because Walgreen's was one of the few stores that sold this brand. I had not had time to empty the trunk, but, since I had not expected to use my car to transport, I had not remembered that my trunk was quite filled with sanitary napkins! The assistant principal got my attention and pointed to the trunk, her face red and grinning, and all three male staff members stood there staring. No one said a word.

I quickly assessed that everyone felt awkward and embarrassed. Humor was increasingly becoming my way of transcending the tension between the need to appear to be in control of every situation and the reality that the tasks of a principal were beyond any individual's ability to efficiently control. "Well, I thought we might need some packing to cushion the desk," I laughed, shrugging nonchalantly. Everyone started laughing and, with all the excitement we had already experienced, we couldn't stop laughing. That was when the assistant principal dubbed us as the "A Team." Like the television heroes known as the "A Team," we saw

ourselves analogously undaunted in the face of adversity. Our simple mission to obtain a desk resulted in an escapade that tested our versatility, evidenced by breaking and entering a locked facility, securing a boon of five brand new office chairs as well as the mission objective, a brand new desk, and facing a gender challenge symbolized by numerous sanitary napkins. To celebrate this momentous occasion, I announced that I would treat everyone to some "sliders" (White Castles) for lunch. The assistant principal and I purchased thirty-six sliders and laughed all the way back to school.

After securing the desk in its proper place, the "A Team" converged on the teacher's lounge and devoured the White Castles. Amidst merriment and wild retelling of our deeds, I told them that the slider communion would have to become an annual event.

## Building Community: The Schedule

### Building Community Through Empowerment

The staff at West had adopted an innovative schedule at the close of the previous year. It was to go into effect at the beginning of my first year as principal. A group of teacher leaders had traveled to Iowa the previous year with the former principal to see this eight-period day schedule. It allowed for individual planning time and team planning time on a daily basis in use in schools there.

Since I believed that developing collaboration and community were fundamental to the school's success, I believed that the new schedule was a critical step toward positive change at West. I felt that by providing teachers time to plan and collaborate together on a daily basis, the teachers would develop a more collegial climate. Since, in my experience, most schools are still struggling with structures and schedules that divide the staff rather than unite them, I was excited that this school was ready to move ahead with an innovative schedule.

The eight-period day schedule was complex to understand and to implement. Not only did it revolve around six related arts classes, but also the one-third of the school that was housed in the Annex had to have related arts and lunch scheduled one after the other to limit traveling back and forth. In addition, a new multi-grade team comprised of 7th and 8th graders had to be accommodated in such a way that half of the teachers on the team continued to teach the 8th graders while the 7th graders went to related arts classes followed by lunch and vice versa. This schedule was a challenge! Laura, a bright and respected teacher leader, had developed the schedule in consultation with the former principal and with Sandy, another key leader. Trudy, one of the counselors, gave input and assistance in its development. The faculty voted in May of the prior year to deviate from the union contract to adopt the schedule. What this demonstrated to me was

that an informal but powerful leadership network had been guiding the school.

While I had developed schedules at other schools, I had no experience with an eight-period day schedule. In addition, I was not yet familiar with the personality of the West staff and its context. Therefore I delegated the development and implementation of the schedule to the counselors, particularly Trudy, who had traveled to Iowa and had seen the schedule in operation at a school there. I had no need to appear to be the expert.

Both counselors had only one year of experience as counselors. They both had come to West as new counselors last year. Even though I recognized that they lacked experience in schedule building, they were both very bright, capable, and industrious workers. I knew that the only way to learn scheduling was to do it. So I turned it over to them. I delighted in the growth I observed as they took on the implementation of the schedule.

Though the counselors worked together to develop the schedule, Trudy emerged with primary responsibility. I had decided to allow the counselors to choose their focus. Irv had quicker skills in problem solving than Trudy and communicated the 'big picture' more clearly. Trudy often conceived of creative ways to solve schedule problems that no one else thought of.

From week to week the counselors struggled with new configurations of schedule possibilities. They would discuss ideas on the phone with

Laura, a teacher who had also traveled to Iowa and who had a great deal of innate talent in scheduling. Though I never felt certain that the schedule was totally in hand, I felt confident enough in both counselors' skills to continue to let them oversee it. I felt that my vote of confidence in my team was critical. At no time did I feel the need to take over this responsibility. The week before the teachers came back, I requested a copy of the schedule.

The plan met the criterion I expected for a workable schedule. Trudy then presented her idea that, instead of the counselors grouping the students in homeroom and related arts groups before the teachers came back for three days of training prior to the opening of school, the teachers would complete the schedule on their first day back. Trudy felt that this process would give the teachers more ownership. I felt that finalizing the schedule this late was very risky but agreed that the teachers would have more ownership. Trudy had seen this approach work well in another school and really wanted to use this plan. I agreed even though I would have been far more comfortable with a finalized plan before the teachers came back.

Managing Conflict Through Negotiating

On Thursday, the teachers came back. After coffee and doughnuts, they were released to their rooms to work. In the early afternoon, Trudy presented the master schedule to them, gave them the names of students on their teams, asked them to group the students and turn in the final schedule by the end of the day.

Toward the end of the day, the team leader of the related arts team came to me with a puzzled expression. She explained that she had already scheduled the students but believed that she had misunderstood Trudy and may have failed to schedule half of them. I checked with Trudy, and, sure enough, the entire schedule had to be reworked because of this miscommunication. In fact, the team leader had misinformed the related arts teachers that the length of the classes was 45 minutes, when it was actually 90 minutes. We decided we would have to call a meeting the first thing in the morning with the related arts teachers.

We met with the related arts teachers the next morning. It was the Friday before the Monday when students would arrive. They were not happy when they learned that instead of having very small classes they were to have very large classes. They were overwhelmed when they learned that the related arts classes were to be 90 minutes long instead of the usual 45 minutes. Many of them said they had neither curriculum nor supplies in preparation for this. I wondered, because the 90-minute sessions were integral to the plan, exactly who was paying attention when the faculty voted on this schedule last spring. However, I said nothing. Some of these teachers were new and had not voted on the schedule. I felt that the priority was to focus on solving the problem.

I proposed a compromise. The schedule would still work even if the related arts teachers wanted to use 45 minute sessions. Most of the teams

were using 90 minute blocks but the related arts time could be organized in smaller units of time without causing changes in the ninety-minute blocks of time on the teams.

It was important to me that everyone with talent in scheduling give input to revise the schedule. I asked Laura, who had also been to Iowa and had talent in scheduling, to be part of our discussion and lend her assistance. She quickly revised the details of the schedule plan. This new schedule seemed to put the related arts team to rest. They felt that they could implement it.

I was pleased. I felt we were able to reach consensus and problem solve in a constructive manner. Flexibility and risk taking allowed us to develop a plan that was new but the modifications to the familiar 45-minute blocks of time made these teachers more comfortable. Though this modification changed the original plan somewhat, the revised schedule accommodated the needs of those teachers who had to implement it.

I believe that the only way to develop ownership is to allow those who implement a plan to shape it. I reflected that the context of a situation is vital to any direction I take. Direction is derived from context.

We ended the morning with everyone in favor of the new schedule though somewhat anxious as to how it would work. We ended the day with a faculty meeting in which I gave a "fire in the belly" sermon. I gave an impassioned presentation to the teachers about moral leadership as an

integral aspect of our mission at West Middle School. I hoped to engage them on the level that stirred in them the desire and passion that first called them to be "a teacher." It is on that level, and only on that level, that mission in schools can be realized, I thought to myself. The day ended with a sense of hope, commitment, and community. We had fashioned a new schedule, and it testified to the high purpose of our mission. Both held great promise.

Building Teaming

Before the day ended, Trudy and Irv came to me, chagrined. They had just discerned that the revision in our related arts schedule put one of the classes over the legal class size limit. They reported that we would need another teacher. I began to feel quite nervous. How could such an oversight occur? And at such a late notice? Then, I remembered how inexperienced they were--only one year old. I reported that we could not hire a teacher. I suggested we review the data to make sure we understood our problem. After we took a situation assessment, I unhappily concurred with their analysis. Having no idea what we would figure out, I stated that we would have to come up with another plan. I wondered if maybe I should have done the schedule myself, but realized that Trudy and Irv would only learn by doing it themselves.

Then, I felt the exhilaration of being part of a team and that it was at these moments when being supportive was the most important. Believing

in others especially when mistakes and oversights are made is the real strength of team, I thought. It's easy to support others when they're perfect. It's what you do when they make mistakes that really counts! Knowing that freedom to make mistakes increases a person's organizational ability to take risks gave me confidence that solving problems together with my staff was more beneficial than my taking the role of expert!

I thought about the importance of not destroying my counselors' confidence. I tried to screen my frustration and disappointment.

Irv thought a minute about our schedule, which, I was realizing, we would have to redo. Irv suggested that, perhaps, students could be assigned as aides, which would prevent us from having to redo the schedule.

I felt like I had just picked up wind in my sails! Once again I felt redeemed. I had this sense of jumping off a cliff and someone always catching me. That's what being a beginning principal felt like--always being up in the air but never hitting ground.

The next day was Saturday. I had many details to attend to. Trudy and Irv's priority was to straighten out the schedule changes, run corrected schedules, and have them in all the teachers' mailboxes. I asked Trudy to put the homeroom lists on my desk before she left.

I stayed very late. Around 11 pm, when I was ready to leave, I looked for the schedule lists indicating where 600 students were to report Monday morning. They were not on my desk. I slumped into a chair and

almost cried. It was too late to call Trudy and Irv. I went home but couldn't sleep.

Trudy had said she would be in the next day. I arrived by 11 am, having had little sleep. Around 1 pm I could no longer wait. I called Trudy, but she wasn't home. I was frantic. Six hundred students were reporting in the morning, and no schedule was in sight. Why didn't I take care of it myself? I was beginning to panic.

At 3 pm, Trudy arrived. I explained to her, as politely as I could, that I was fretting over the schedule because it wasn't on my desk where I had asked her to put it. She apologized and said she had left it on her desk. There it was--so professional looking--a schedule! A schedule. I had no idea if it worked. At this point, I would settle for the semblance of a plan. I thanked her, glad that I did not show the full intensity of my anxiety.

That night I did surrender to sleep. At times I woke up almost in a panic. I envisioned six hundred kids for whom I was responsible. I did not know them yet. I envisioned buses coming and going--I was not sure how, when, and where. The Xerox machines had broken on Saturday. They were fixed on Sunday afternoon because I was able to arrange emergency repairs. In trying to sleep, I kept envisioning all the machines breaking down again. I finally gave up and went to sleep.

The next morning I was at school by 5:30 am. I was poised on the cliff--ready to jump. The buses arrived. Teachers appeared. The hallways were supervised. Announcements were made. Classes began. No one panicked--including me. Business as usual was underway. When it was time for students to go to related arts, Trudy and Irv were in the hallways guiding them. The counselors knew where the kids were supposed to go. There were just minor glitches here and there.

The big glitch was in the lunchroom. The lunch lines backed up two hours because the lunch room supervisor, who was also only "a year-old," did not input essential data into the computer ahead of time. She was too new and inexperienced to anticipate what problem this would cause in serving students efficiently. At the end of the first day, I called the food service office and demanded that they assist her in straightening out the lunch problem by inputting data into the computer before the next day! The food service personnel blamed my food service manager for not inputting the data properly. She blamed them for not giving her the proper data. I was not interested in "naming and blaming," I wanted those lunch lines to work better the next day. With their assistance my manager straightened out the problems and the lunch lines moved much faster the next day.

At 6 pm, I came home exhausted but satisfied.

Managing Conflict Through Relationship

As time passed we learned that adopting a new schedule was not an easy process. First, we had to figure out the plan that seemed to best suit us. We could not fit the identical schedule that the staff saw in Iowa to our school. It took considerable time, energy, creativity, and negotiation to develop the plan we finally agreed upon. I had a sense of organizational unity in accomplishing just that much. I believe we all felt invigorated by the process. However, by the fifth week of school, the invigoration had turned to revolt. The schedule was far from perfect. Implementation of the schedule was much more difficult than envisioning the schedule on paper. One of the complications had nothing to do with the schedule but with the building. We had eliminated all bells and relied solely on our watches to coordinate the schedule. The building had no synchronized clock system; therefore, no two clocks ever told the same time. Whenever a teacher was not at his or her station as assigned, (i.e., picking up their students from lunch and related arts or being in their classroom ready to start class), he or she would attribute the cause of the error to a difference in time displayed by the clocks. Most of the time the inaccuracy of the clocks did cause the problem. Our inability to rely on the clocks in the building became a big problem which we had not foreseen. There was a simple solution. By the third week, I began to announce Wildcat Time over the PA. This became the official "Greenwich Mean" time of our school. Of course,

there were some staff who were consistently late and offered the copout that they didn't wear a watch. Most people, however, finally adjusted to following Wildcat Time but not before a lot of griping, and "let's go back to the old schedule and bells" talk became pervasive.

One of the biggest problems with the schedule was the inability of the related arts teachers to follow it. They could not keep track of their students. A few of them simply did not take roll consistently. They reported that they had too many students in class and complained about it constantly. However, when I would send the counselors to check on the problem, the counselors invariably indicated that students had withdrawn from the school, but the related arts teachers had not deleted these students from their class lists. Thus the related arts teachers mistakenly complained about being over class size. Since they were not supportive of the schedule in the first place, I wondered if they were making the necessary efforts to make the schedule work.

Another problem with implementation of the schedule was the fact that all of the related arts classes were located in the same corridor of the building. Consequently, every 45 minutes one third of the school would be bouncing from one classroom to another in a very small area. The resulting frenzy made it more difficult to settle the students down when it was time for class. In addition, several teams of teachers did not understand how to modify instruction for a 90-minute block schedule and had great difficulty

programming particularly for special education student needs. Consequently, teachers began to talk about voting out the schedule.

I was aghast at the thought of losing innovative momentum so quickly. I reflected on my role as minister. I knew that we were moving in the right direction and that staff were uncomfortable adjusting to change. How could I help them see what the real problem was? How could I help them struggle through this adjustment period, work on legitimate improvement, and not throw out a good idea because it wasn't perfect? How quickly we revert to familiar ways rather than adapt to new challenges, I thought. The only way I, as minister principal, could influence the direction of the staff was to influence the teacher leaders.

I asked Laura and Sandy and Betty, who were all supportive of the schedule, to help me save the schedule. Laura gave me schedules to share with the sixth grade team that would help to solve their problems. We agreed that it was important that they not know that Laura was giving me the information because of the peer jealousy that seemed to exist. Laura's ideas really helped the sixth grade problems. I also met with the seventh grade team to elicit their concerns. They expressed negative ideas about the schedule.

One day, I asked their team leader to meet me for a drink at a local restaurant. After a Marguerita and a heart-to-heart talk, we began to develop collegial rapport and personal respect. After our talk I could rely on

this team leader to connect with me and the others in progressively moving toward positive change.

Finally I met with the related arts teachers. I asked them to consider the 90 minute blocks which they had rejected. I told them that less student movement in their corridor would give them more control. Even though they were fearful of ninety minutes of full instruction, they liked the idea of less movement and a more settled atmosphere. I agreed as part of my bargain to sell the schedule to buy them more supplies. The related arts teachers agreed to try 90 minutes of instruction, as I had proposed.

To undertake this revision meant that we had to completely redo the schedule. I decided that I would not ask the counselors who had invested so much time already to solve the schedule problem alone. I hired a retired counselor who was experienced in scheduling to work with them. Laura developed an innovative way of grouping all students in related arts in groups in an effort to redistribute students and more positively affect behavior. Using Laura's concept, I sent Irv and Trudy out of the building for two days with the retired counselor to develop a new schedule. I saw this as an investment in their education. When Irv returned, he told me how much he had learned. The retired counselor said she learned a lot also. She had never developed such a complicated schedule in her life!

The new schedule worked! The "A team did it again," the administrative staff began to say, in an exhilarated way.

After several weeks, the grumbling among the teachers diminished considerably. By the middle of the first semester, the schedule, though still not perfect, had become a way of school life. We were used to no bells, clocks, or short periods. We had turned a corner. By negotiating and listening to one another, the key teacher leaders had created a climate for change. I had assisted them in nurturing and guiding others to choose the path of change and innovation.

Preaching the Sermon on the Schedule

However, when spring came round, talk began again about voting out the schedule. The new schedule did not suit everyone. The more progressive and innovative the teams and the more comfortable with risk taking and change--the more those teams liked the schedule. I noticed that those teams were also characterized by a high degree of collaboration and friendship. The new schedule maximized teamwork. However, teams that were isolated in work habits increasingly came to dislike the schedule. These teams, especially the related arts team, could not adjust to the ninety-minute blocks of instructional time.

In April, we had to vote again to deviate from the teacher union contract to keep the new schedule for next year. There was talk in the building of voting out the schedule. Almost the entire related arts team was still opposed to it. The seventh grade team was increasingly opposed, and one of the sixth grade teams did not enthusiastically endorse it. I was

afraid that the two-thirds majority of supporters that was needed to maintain it was dwindling.

Informally, I expressed my concern to Laura, Betty, Sandy, and Noel, all either team leaders or department chairs. They told me who they felt they could influence to "come around." I began to look for barriers and concerns that made staff negative about the schedule. Kathy, a key leader in the building, responsibly felt that our students did not need ninety minutes of related arts a day when they were so deficient in academic and basic skills. I realized she was right. I suggested we attach a Chapter One reading teacher to the related arts team. She volunteered to become part of that team and to start a reading program the next year. I talked to the related arts teachers about the idea. I told them I would assign Chapter One aides to help in their classes. They became supportive of the new schedule. I talked with the seventh grade and with the sixth grade. I reminded them that the ninety-minute instructional time provided longer periods of uninterrupted instruction. They expressed concerns in creating effective special education resource and collaboration programs with this schedule. I asked Trudy, the counselor who was special education certified, to work with them on these scheduling issues.

Laura, the participatory management chair, published an announcement that the vote on the schedule would take place at the next faculty meeting. When that Tuesday came, I felt anxious. I realized that I

had a need for "my team" to be risk-takers. I decided to take a stand. I gave a sermon at the faculty meeting. I saw myself not as principal but a minister because I sensed a moral choice was at stake. I believed that we were holding in our hands the trust of youngsters and their parents and that we had an obligation to do our very best. I did not believe a staff could do its best if it were afraid to take risks and adopt new strategies. Why was innovation so important to me, I wondered? Maybe because so much was not working here. We needed to be enterprising to change the West school to impact students more positively.

I told the staff that I did not feel that one year was enough time to evaluate the effectiveness of the schedule. I asked them to be willing to work on the concerns and problems that they experienced but not to vote it out. I told them that many schools were watching what we did. I told them that people were paying attention to the staff at West and that I believed in their ability to create a schedule that worked best for kids.

The vote was taken. Only six people voted against it. I guessed that it was the related arts team. I was relieved that the schedule had passed but aware that we had to work on the negative feelings of the group that was voting against it.

We had implemented a new schedule and had struggled all year to "get it right." The struggle was ongoing. I would not be satisfied, I knew, until the schedule reflected a consensus and a substantive kind of teaming

and instruction. We were not there yet, but at least we were headed in the right direction.

## Building Community : Retention

### Managing Conflict

My first experience with the high failure rate at this school occurred in late August of my first year as principal when the aunt of a former student of mine at East school, where I had been assistant principal, called me. She explained that her nephew attended West school the year before I came and that he had failed. I had worked hard with this student when he was at East. He was already three grade levels behind. Even though he was unmotivated to do his work, I felt that he needed to have the opportunity to make it in high school. He was certain to drop out of school shortly unless some intervention occurred.

I contacted the teacher at West who had failed him and suggested we work out a contract that would allow him to pass to high school if he met the conditions of the contract. She contended that he deserved to fail because he didn't do his work and that, by passing him, I would send a message that doing work does not matter.

I told her that I did not intend to pass him. I wanted her to give me an exit test that would demonstrate he knew requisite skills to go to high school if he could pass the test. She agreed to do this.

I gave the test to his aunt and asked her to teach him the skills. Two weeks later he spent the morning with me taking the test in blank form. I gave his answers to the teacher, who corrected it and reported that he knew the material sufficiently to go to high school. I felt good about giving him this opportunity. I made him promise to enroll in a special reading class because of his reading problems and talked with the assistant principal at the high school about him.

Establishing Justice

This intervention was the first in a series of activities that I undertook to facilitate the promotion of overage students who were repeatedly failing. In many cases, students were one and two years behind grade level because they had been retained in first or second grade. On one of the teams at West, comprised of 90 students, nearly one-half of the students were behind at least one grade level. I felt that the system of assessment was failing these students, so I began to devise ways to affect teachers' mind sets about student success and failure.

Irv, one of the counselors, had done a paper for his doctoral class on the negative effects of retention on students. With his permission, I circulated his paper to key teacher leaders. I also circulated further research by a national research foundation on the negative impact of retention. I reflected that I needed to be somewhat circumspect in attempting to change this failure mindset. Instead of telling the staff what

I believed, I hoped to expose them to ideas that would stimulate their thinking about these ideas themselves. I gave team leaders copies of a "no fail" program in another middle school in our district. I also collected and distributed data on the number of students that had been retained last year in our school and their success rate this year. Most of them were still failing, indicating that retention does not impact student success positively.

Having circulated these data the coordinator of our after-school tutoring program and I proposed that we allow students who come to our summer school program faithfully and who do their work this summer to be passed on to their next grade level.

In addition, we selected ten seventh graders who were behind one or two grade levels but were capable students to participate in a special program. We planned to allow these students to attend our two-week summer school and the high school's two-week summer school. At the end, they would be promoted to the ninth grade if they were successful in attendance and performance.

When school began the following fall, I was amazed that I heard less resistance to the notion of decreasing our retention rates. Our summer school teachers gave testimonials to the dedication and work that the students had done in summer school. I praised our summer school coordinator, who had inspired these teachers with the notion of providing accelerated programming instead of remedial "worksheets." The summer

school teachers had engaged students in creative, worthwhile project learning that challenged and stimulated them. The students refrained from negative, apathetic behavior and positively impressed the summer school teachers. Because of the support and investment in student success that the summer program spawned, attitudes toward retention began to change.

The climate of the eighth grade the following year was extremely positive. The teachers were pleasantly amazed. I did not hesitate to point out that the school climate was improved because some of the students who needed to be in high school were gone. At every chance I could get, I tried to reinforce increasing student success.

I did follow up on the ten seventh graders who had been promoted to ninth grade (they were all at least fifteen years old). The majority of them were being very successful.

The sixth grade team which had, like all teams, a large number of students failing the year before, did not have the same experience this year. Several sixth grade teachers had taught in summer school and had seen how capable the students who normally failed really were. Attitudes seemed to be changing, resulting in less failure for students.

Another program I designed in my second year at West was a Transition program that allowed students who had failed the previous year to work their way to grade level before the academic year was over. The concept was to provide fewer than twenty students the opportunity to work

with a teacher in an intensive workshop environment to increase basic skills and success behaviors. Unlike other students, they had only one teacher and an aide and remained in that classroom until they were released from the program. The small teacher to student ratio allowed this teacher to refer many of this very needy population for social and special education services. Eventually, this program became attached to the multi-grade team to allow the students more opportunity to socialize with other students.

Thus, gradually, we were building into the fabric of West School a program designed to increase student success.

## Building Community: Innovation

### Preaching a Sermon

The year I came to West a new multi-grade team had begun. The goal of this team was to provide adolescents the opportunity for community by remaining with the same teachers and students throughout their middle school years. Of course, I was very supportive of the concept. Not only was this kind of community good for students, but the flexibility that such a team provided was a real boon. It is easier to stay in compliance with state law class size limits if one team could take a mixture of all grade levels.

In the third week of school, my second year as principal, we were confronted with schedule problems because an abundance of eighth graders created an imbalance in the teams. Because we had more eighth graders

than expected I was faced with decreasing the number of sixth and seventh graders on the multi-grade team and increasing the number of eighth graders. This would decrease the number of students who would have extended experience over three years on this team because the majority would be eighth graders this year.

The counselors, myself, and the team leaders came up with a plan to reorganize the teams, which meant another schedule. The day before we were ready to execute the plan, the multi-grade team asked for a special meeting. The multi-grade team indicated that they felt that moving seventh graders off their team would destroy the concept of the multi-grade team; instead, they proposed that they would be willing to go over class size (a decision that is legal if a two-thirds majority of the teachers agree) in order to retain seventh graders on the team. Subsequent discussion was heated partly because the proposal was so last minute and partly because many staff felt that this team, comprised of some very vocal teachers, always got what they wanted. Nevertheless, I insisted that the floor be open to discuss all thoughts. I stated that I understood there was frustration about being asked to reexamine the decision we had just made to adopt a schedule that preceded the multi-grade team's request. However, I pointed out that new information (the offer to go over class size) had given us new options that we didn't have the first time. I quoted Emerson, "Foolish consistency is the hobglobin of little minds" to myself.

We called a special meeting to be held the next day to discuss the schedule. Irv, the counselor, agreed to work up a new draft of the schedule and present it. Irv was not particularly happy about this and secured some help from the multi-grade team for tasks to be accomplished. The next afternoon we had an open meeting for anyone interested in the discussion. I personally invited two groups of teachers that I anticipated might be opposed to the schedule change. To begin the meeting, I preached a brief sermon on the importance of supporting one another and the importance of working as a team for the good of the whole school and the students. Because I was aware of concerns about favoritism toward the multigrade team, I pointed out that what I valued was innovation and progressivism. I reminded the faculty that feelings are perceptions; problems solving must be supported by fact. I invited the staff to share their feelings which were important but to remain open regarding the facts of the case.

After thrashing over ideas for three hours, we came to an agreement to proceed with the proposal that the multi-grade team had proposed. We also incorporated a number of compromises that helped other teams. The next afternoon we held a faculty meeting and voted. The measure passed with six dissensions. I suspected that the related arts teachers who were uncomfortable teaching a multi-grade group had dissented. I had made sure that some compromises were made to make them feel more comfortable. We had lowered the class size of the group they would have to

teach. I made sure an aide would accompany that group. I also pointed out that even though the group was categorized into grades six, seven and eight, the students were actually close in age. Nearly all of them were thirteen or fourteen.

We implemented the schedule. The team of teachers who were against the change continued to complain about it. The rest of the staff liked the schedule.

Managing Conflict

A new problem arose because additional students arrived and were placed on the multi-grade team, increasing the number of students beyond the promised lower class size for the related arts team. To solve the dilemma, the sixth grade team and the librarian took some of them as aides and the multi-grade team kept the rest during their planning period.

Many staff felt that this was only fair because this team had created the dilemma in the first place. The team itself felt that, because they were trying to make an innovative program work for kids, they should be supported by the rest of the staff. They felt demoralized because others were not willing to help.

Frankly, I felt that all this hubbub over one or two students was silly. The underlying issue, it seemed to me, was an issue of power. Many staff perceived the multi-grade team as too powerful. They appeared to resent

the request of the multi-grade team for help because they perceived them as getting most things their way.

I was less interested in the issue of power than in programmatic needs for students. I perceived the multi-grade team as providing a great service to the students. Many sixth graders entered our school old enough to be in the seventh or eighth grade. The multi-grade team allowed these students to be placed with their age group and provided the opportunity to accelerate them to grade level.

I reflected that I needed to circulate information to the staff regarding multi-grade teams in the same way I had circulated information about retention. Staff seemed to get caught up easily in personality conflicts whenever issues related to this team surfaced. I needed to help them better understand the underlying purpose of the team and its service to students.

In January, a new opportunity arose to have a permanent substitute on staff to provide release time for teachers to engage in peer observation and coaching. The multi-grade team requested the use of the substitute one day a week for ninety minutes to relieve them of supervision of the seven to nine students who were their aides during their planning time. This request kicked off another round of controversy. The School Based Decision Making Council, the governing body of the school, appointed a subcommittee to propose a schedule for the use of the substitute's time.

Two Council members, Myra and Jane, met with me to develop a plan. Jane opposed the use of the sub for the multi-grade team; Myra supported it. Jane offered to find placements for these students. I encouraged this. She had never shown leadership initiative before. I felt it was positive to see Jane take initiative and responsibility to solve this problem.

The next day Jane reported that she had placed all but one student. I commended her publicly for her effort. I informed her, however, that we had four new students and that our fluctuating population made placing these students a continual problem.

We held an SBDM meeting the next afternoon. I asked the Council to remember that the idea of the permanent sub was to build a collegial support atmosphere. I had placed the responsibility on how to use the sub on them because agreement on fairness was a first step toward building a collegial team. "Perhaps, I overestimated where we really are," I told them. I observed that the use of the sub had, instead of building collegial support, begun to divide us. In my opening salvo I consciously threw them a challenge. If they couldn't come up with a satisfactory solution that seemed fair to everyone, then we should forget the whole idea and not have a permanent sub at all.

I sat back. They knew I meant what I said. Happily, they began compromising. I saw creative give and take on everyone's part so that, after one hour, we came up with a plan that met everyone's satisfaction.

I praised them by crossing them in a gesture imitating the papal blessing. They laughed. I told them I was very happy with the work they did to resolve this conflict constructively.

A Need For Healing: Ailene and Charles

Building Trust

Ailene was a teacher who had been at the school several years. I met her for the first time about a week before school started. I set up a meeting between another teacher, Charles, and Ailene, so they could get acquainted and discuss joint program planning. The former principal had explained that the participatory management committee of the school had allocated $1000 for equipment for a new program. The new teacher, Charles, had been recruited to coordinate the program. The former principal had authorized Charles to spend the money, but had suggested that he keep some in reserve for Ailene to buy some equipment.

Before the meeting even began, Ailene demanded to know how much of the money was allocated for her program. Her tone was unfriendly, both to me and to the new teacher. I chose not to confront the behavior but to listen instead for the feelings behind the tone. Charles responded that he had already spent all the money because the former principal had told him

to. Even though this was not my understanding of the charge Charles had been given, I did not disclose this difference in understanding. Ailene was angry.

I felt particularly sorry for Charles, who looked sheepish and chagrinned. Ailene jumped up angrily and said: "I'm going to file a grievance. I'm tired of being treated like this." Ailene barged out of the office. Charles looked at me in trepidation.

I intercepted Ailene in the corridor leading to the outer office. I strongly felt the need to approach her in a pastoral, supportive manner. Her trust in administrators, possibly for good reason, was non-existent. I wanted to find a way to awaken this trust again and begin to heal the gulf that I felt existed between us because of our roles, teacher and administrator. Calmly, I apologized for the problem that had surfaced and told Ailene that I understood how she felt. "I'd feel this way too, if it were me," I explained. Ailene continued to rage as if she hadn't heard me at all. "I'm calling Bob (the union representative) and he'll have something to say about this," she said, directing the threat against me.

"Look, Ailene, I haven't done anything to you. I just found out about the problem myself when Charles told us both what has occurred. I agree with you that it's not fair," I said.

"Well, I'm filing a grievance", insisted Ailene. I would come to learn that "filing a grievance" was the way some teachers talked to administrators at this school .

Again, I insisted: "But I haven't done anything to you. I want to work something out."

"I'm going to file a grievance against Ms Wagner (the former principal)," Ailene repeated, though her voice was softer. Ailene definitely wanted to show her muscle.

"You can't," I explained. "She is no longer the principal. I am. Any grievance you file must be against me."

"Well, I don't want to do that but something is wrong. This is not fair. So I guess I'm going to file a grievance."

"Isn't there a better way to work this out, Ailene?" I asked pointedly, using her first name as a bridge between the perceptual gulf that divided us.

Ailene hesitated. I felt that I was getting somewhere. "Look, how much do you need for your program?" I asked. "Probably about $200," said Ailene, believing that this was an extraordinary demand. I was relieved. Even though the participatory management committee had set up a budget of $1000, I decided I would exceed it by $200 more to resolve this dilemma. I did not know how tightly the committee controlled the budget, but felt

that institutional relationships were more important than institutional policies. So I chose to exceed the budget.

"You got it!" I announced. "Go out and get what you need, give or take $200."

"Well, I think that's about what I need," said Ailene, grasping for words.

"I want to work this out," I reiterated.

"Well, I'm sorry if I got upset but I'm tired of being mistreated," explained Ailene.

I reiterated that I understood and that I hoped that she would give me a chance. Ailene explained that no administrator had ever listened to her before. "You're the first one that's listened to me," she said. She then left, still somewhat in a huff, unable to apologize to Charles.

Charles was devastated by the display. I reassured him that I would work closely with them to heal the chasm that had developed.

Coping With Crisis

The following week Ailene had another explosive encounter with a different staff member. Ailene coached two of the athletic teams, and John was the coach of one. Both had mutual needs to use the gym for team practice. John published a schedule for team tryouts in late September. On the second day of tryouts, Ailene took one of teams into the gym to practice. When John told her that his team had to tryout that day, she stomped out

of the gym. John followed her to discuss the problem. I heard Ailene shouting at him in front of students and parents in the hallway. I approached Ailene and asked her what the problem was. I moved her into the library out of the earshot of the public.

"I quit," she announced. "I'm not going to put up with this."

"Ailene," I said. "You're angry right now, but I'm sure we can work this out. Don't quit on the kids. Please don't do that to them," I pleaded.

"I quit," stated Ailene, angrily. "If I can't have the gym like everyone else, I quit."

Recognizing that both coaches could have talked to one another in advance and worked out their mutual needs but chose not to was a school climate issue I stored for future problem solving.

I decided to accept Ailene's resignation from this one team; she still coached another team. In a pastoral way, I wanted her to learn a lesson in self control. However, I decided that I would not talk with her about her unprofessional behavior and risk breaking the fragile trust that was building. I found another coach and remained upbeat and supportive with Ailene.

Healing Others

Several days after school started Charles came to me and said "he couldn't take it anymore". He said that without Ailene's help and support he would have cracked up by now. I was glad that they were learning to

work together but very concerned about his frustration. I asked what was the matter. "It's the kids," said Charles. "I've never been in middle school before. I never expected it to be like this. These kids just don't listen. They are out of control."

I was shocked. This teacher had been touted as an untiring worker, someone who would really work with the students and create an exceptional program for them, which they desperately needed.

"I want to quit," Charles said. I sensed he was feeling overwhelmed and ineffective. I responded in a pastoral, supportive way by nodding my head and listening empathetically.

"You need to give yourself more time. You know, Charles, it's here that you can make the greatest difference. These kids really need you," I urged.

"I know," said Charles. "That's why I came. I really wanted to work with them ... to help them ... but,er, I don't know ... it seems impossible ... I've never seen anything like this."

Charles became inarticulate and overwhelmed again. "Tell you what. Why don't you let me hire a sub so you can go in and work alongside Ailene. You said that she was being helpful. She's worked in this environment and knows what works and what does not work. You could observe her and get lots of ideas."

"Thanks, but I don't know. Everything I plan to do won't work with these kids."

I began to feel frustrated, because to every suggestion I made, Charles had a reason why it wouldn't work. Then Charles said, "Part of the reason I wanted to be here was to work with these kids. I know what these kids really need. I'm a minister at my church. But I just can't seem to do it ...," Charles's voiced trailed off again.

"You know, Charles, you and I have something in common. When I first came here, I couldn't believe it, either. These kids are so needy and underdeveloped. I realized that ministry was really the need here. There's a lot of healing to be done. Try to think in terms of doing the things that a minister would do," I suggested. "You just have to give it some time. Now when can I get you a sub so you can work with Ailene?"

"I don't know ... I'll let you know," was all Charles muttered vaguely.

After this encounter, I asked Irv, the male counselor, and another staff member to check on Charles and give him some support. I also thanked Ailene for being so helpful. Ailene candidly pointed out that helping him was in her best interest because last year a new teacher quit about this time and she had to put up with substitutes who messed up her equipment. "At least Charles is better than I had last year," was her assessment.

As weeks passed, Charles' self report that he could not handle his classes proved to be increasingly true. The fire alarm was pulled eight times under his supervision. On a day to day basis fights broke out in his classes. Assistant principals reported that lack of supervision in his classes created conditions for the fights to erupt. Furthermore, Charles never accurately reported which students had perpetrated the fights, so consequences were seldom effective. Often, his testimony would conflict with that of the students who were present. He usually blamed the students for the problem, never himself or his lack of supervision.

In addition, Charles seemed to be unable to take an accurate class count. The counselors repeatedly asked for this information so they could get class counts within state ratio guidelines by the target date. Charles's information was so inconsistent that finally the counselors had to count the students and cross check them with the class lists themselves. Students would cut other teachers' classes and attend Charles's class. He seldom caught them. One day I asked him why a specific child who was not on his class list was in his class the day before. He insisted that only the students on his class roster attended his class. Again, I reiterated that a specific child was in his class inappropriately the day before. He just shrugged his shoulders and said he did not know how they snuck in but his class was too big for him to notice.

Charles began to miss work. One day, shortly after the third month of school, Charles came to see me. "I can't do this anymore," he said. "The kids are the worst kids I have ever seen." No matter what hopeful words or suggestions I made, he negated them by saying nothing would work. I called upon my pastoral role but I observed that Charles seemed unable to focus or attend to my words. Charles began to miss work for long periods of time.

Admonishing Behavior

Ailene and Charles had morning supervision duty, but Ailene was never on time. Charles had let me know that he did not mind doing it alone because Ailene had helped him so much.

When Charles began missing work, however, the substitute teacher for Charles often did not arrive on time either. Over three hundred students were reporting to the gym and I had no assurance that any staff would be on time to supervise them. I decided to approach Ailene. "Ailene, I need your help," I said. I explained that I was aware that because of child care challenges that she had a hard time being on time. However, now that a substitute was her partner, I really needed her to be there on time. She smiled and did not become defensive. She agreed to try.

Though Ailene did try to be on time, she just was not reliable. I approached her again and explained that because of our liability something had to change. I then said, using a prophetic approach, that we must provide quality supervision in order to keep our students safe. She did not

become defensive. I suggested that we trade her morning duty for afternoon duty with another teacher. She traded duty supervision with another teacher and was cooperative and helpful during afternoon duty supervision for the rest of the year.

Enabling Others

Charles returned to work after Christmas break. The false fire drills continued. Now and then, he shared something positive with me. He continued to shrug when I offered my help. He seemed resigned that the situation would not get better. Sometimes I got reports from the students that he told them that they were the worst kids he had ever seen.

In late spring, when it was time to determine what teaching positions would be available at West for the following year, I decided to eliminate Charles' position. He chose to transfer back to elementary school where he had been successful. Both he and I agreed that this was best for him.

The last week of school I received an invitation from Ailene to attend a banquet for her team. I had funded every event Ailene had requested this year, which was not excessive. A parent of one of the team members came in to see me one day. She told me that she was embarrassed for our school. The other schools had team uniforms. Our students wore their own clothes and did not look as competitive, she said. She offered to help next year. I resolved to get uniforms for the team. Despite their appearance, our team

came in third in the district. Several students won first and second place trophies. I was proud of them and of Ailene.

Ailene conducted a very nice banquet for the team. Each student received a patch. Most received a trophy. She had paid for these by selling candy after school in the cafeteria when she was on supervision duty. Unlike other coaches who received a small stipend for their work, Ailene's work was purely voluntary. I saw potential in her.

## A Need For Healing: Eric

### Healing Others

Eric was one of the first students whose names I learned. The second day of school he came into my office, saying, "I'm going to hit him, I'm going to hit him if he don't stop!".

"Who, Eric?", I asked. "Who are you going to hit?" Eric responded in effusive mutterings, none of which I could understand.

"Slow down, Eric. I want to help you. Tell me what's wrong," I offered.

"No," insisted Eric. "I'm going to hit him."

At that, Eric rose from the chair that he had placed himself in and proceeded to leave the office in search of his prey. I took hold of his shoulders and gently spun him around to face me. "Eric you'll be in trouble if you hit anyone," I said.

"I don't care, I don't care, " he muttered. "He's not going to do that to me. Talk about my mother and stuff."

Facing him off, I moved him back to the chair and spoke sternly. "You don't need to let him get you in trouble. You don't want to get in trouble. Now, we're going to sit here until you're calm and can tell me what happened and what needs to happen to solve this problem," I insisted.

"But he...," Eric started. I cut him off immediately.

"I'm not going to listen until you are calm. Now take a deep breath. That's right. We'll talk in a minute. Right now I want you to be very still."

Recognizing that Eric was a special child, I decided to keep him with me most of the morning. I learned that "him," the target of Eric's anger, was a student that had made fun of him in the cafeteria. Eric's gums were enlarged, possibly from usage of medication such as Ritalin, which I suspected he might be taking. He was a thin African American boy of medium height who had great difficulty keeping his mouth shut.

I saw very quickly that Eric was a kid that other kids picked on. Kids could easily "set up" Eric because he had a loose handle on his emotions. In no way was he a bully. His quick threats and mutterings were the result of years of being harassed and victimized by kids. I learned that in the neighborhood where he lived, normal kids were placed in a daily struggle to maintain self esteem against threats, harassment, name calling, and confrontation. A special child like Eric was an easy victim. (I was able

to get Eric together with the target of his rage, who apologized, and the immediate problem was solved.)

However, before the day was out Eric was back. Again, he was venting and fuming and ready to hit "him" for transgressing another of Eric's rights. Because the school bell was getting ready to ring, I was able to get Eric to agree to go home on the bus and come and see me tomorrow, when we would once again solve this problem in the right way. He agreed.

The next morning, before I could make my coffee, Eric was at my door. He rode the bus that dropped off students an hour before school began. I was beginning to suspect that Eric had decided he would spend this time enlisting me as an ally in his defense against the world. That morning we mediated a problem with his enemy from the day before. Within two hours after school had begun, however, he was back. His teacher came with him. She reported that "something had to be done." He couldn't sit in his seat or keep his mouth shut. He was always bothering other kids and threatening them. Eric, of course, was denying any wrongdoing. When I told him I was going to call his mother, he pleaded, "Please don't call my mother, please don't call her. She'll get mad at me." He expressed such fear and anxiety that both the teacher and I exchanged a glance with one another. I bartered. "OK, I won't call your mother if you promise to go back and do what your teacher wants you to do. You must ignore the other kids and leave them alone." "OK," he readily agreed.

But Eric couldn't ignore other kids. They didn't ignore him. Once again, at lunchtime, he had an argument with another student and ended up back in my office. By now, I understood that "him" was whoever had chosen to pick on and torment Eric that hour. As the days continued, these incidences escalated to almost hourly encounters. Eric bounced back and forth between the assistant principal, the counselor, and me. The teachers were going crazy. Other students were either victimizing or being victimized in an ongoing cycle that swirled around Eric. "Him" could be a female student, a teacher, a staff member, usually another male student. But it could be anyone who roused Eric's anger, which wasn't hard to do. Once Eric was "fired up", it took carefully paced, soft talk, and, sometimes, gentle physical restraint to keep him in the office to get him to calm down.

We had no records on Eric. So the second week of school, after much detective work (records and data were not easily accessible yet), I found a phone number and contacted his mother. His mother explained that he belonged in a special class for behavior disordered students. This was no surprise to me.

"Eric," I said, "you know how other kids are bothering you. Well, we have a special class where you can go to get away from them." I had called Eric into the office for a special meeting with just him and me. I had let him use my M and M man for a "treat." (One of my incentives for good behavior was an M and M dispenser in the form of an M and M man. The

student pulled the M and M man's hand and received a generous heaping of M and M's from the other hand of the dispenser.) As soon as I stated my proposal to Eric, he jumped up, yelling; "No, I don't belong in no special program. No, I'm going to tell my mother. I'm not going to a special program. I want to be with the rest of the kids."

Eric's protestations confirmed, in my mind, that he had first hand experience with special programs and that that was where he belonged in his current developmental stage. He was very clear and definite about his opinion of "special programs". I explained to him that when he was able to learn to ignore the other kids and get along better, we would take him out of the special program.

His new teacher, the teacher for the behavior disordered program, having been requested by me to come, entered the office to meet him. She was a pleasant and professional woman who was very capable of giving Eric the attention and structure he needed. I felt he would be in good hands. Together, they walked out the door. His muttering continued, though less dramatically. His new teacher was a very attractive African American woman, a warm but firm role model that Eric was about to discover would become his friend.

Teaching a Hard Lesson

Eric burst into my office. "I got in a fight," he said. I had become so accustomed to Eric's mutterings that I quickly understood his version of the

story. The bus had let him off at his bus stop along with some other students. A conflict that had begun at lunch yesterday was resumed at the bus stop as soon as the bus pulled away. "I didn't start it," Eric protested, as I was making my coffee. "I'm not going to let him push me around," he announced.

Eric was growing. He had now arrived at the stage when he had to show his muscle. He was no longer willing to stop at muttering, threatening and protesting against his assailants. He wanted to try his fists. I knew what I had to do. "What's the rule about fighting, Eric?" I asked.

"I don't know," he lied.

"Oh, yes you do. Eric, you know you get suspended from school for fighting."

"No, you don't understand. I didn't fight. He hit me first," stated Eric assertively, justifying his action as self defense. This was a typical parent and student rationale for fighting in school.

When I investigated further, I found that Eric's account was not accurate. He had been baited and name called by the other student. Students in Eric's class, who are also members of the behavior disordered program, rallied around, and agitated Eric by saying: "You're not going to let him get away with that, are you? Don't be a chicken, Eric hit him." Eric, in his need to make friends with these students, hit first. A fight

ensued that was broken up by the boys that agitated it in the first place. A typical middle school "set up."

Eric was suspended for his first fight. He cried, "Please don't suspend me, please don't. I didn't start it." I called his mother and explained that he would need to stay home the next day as a consequence for his poor decision to fight. Though Eric protested, I believed that he wore his suspension as a badge of honor. He had finally discovered his manhood and, in his neighborhood, you had to fight to protect it.

Hearing the Call

The last bell rang finally on the last day of school. Kids were everywhere, running, and yelling that school was out. In an effort to at least make a stand against disorder and chaos, I took my place in the front lobby and began catching runners and chastising them. Then, remembering it was the last day of school, I began to feel helpless and frustrated that it was too late to do anything. Looking at the chaotic dismissal of the school year, I began to wonder if we had made any real change at all on some levels.

Coming up the hall toward me was Eric. I saw a calmer more mature child before me. Though he still muttered and raged, he did it more as a habit than a passion. It had become much easier to redirect Eric in a positive direction. He hadn't asked me to get out of the special program in months. He had settled into the safe structure that he needed.

"Bye, Ms Calvert," said Eric, in a friendly greeting. Then, he looked straight at me. "We have ghosts for principals," he said.

"What did you say?" I asked, thinking I misunderstood his mutterings.

"We have ghosts for principals," he repeated. "Bye, Ms Calvert," said Eric.

I heard above all the din and frenzy his farewell floating down the hall behind him. It stuck in my throat. His goodby was final. Ghosts for principals, he had said. Why ghosts? Then I realized that ghosts disappear. Like all the principals before me, he didn't expect me to come back.

## Making Rounds: Teaching, Preaching and Counseling

### Teaching Democratic Process

A teacher reported a discipline incident between two students. Because this teacher was a capable leader and possibly a future administrator, I asked the district investigators, who are called to investigate serious incidents of assault, if they would be willing to instruct this teacher and the other teachers on the team how due process and the discipline code are applied in cases like this. The teacher who reported the incident, other teachers on the team, the assistant principal and I, along with the investigators, reviewed the case, weighed options and discussed how the discipline code and due process would be followed in this case. One

of the key tenets of instruction that I wanted to get across was the complexity of such cases. Handling discipline in a school is a series of steps that begins with the teacher who reports the incident and ends with the administrator who must make a decision as to the appropriate consequences. Because of student confidentiality and due process, application of consequences for actions can be slow. I explained that due process requires the use of convincing evidence before serious disciplinary action can be taken.

In the course of the conference, Duncan, a key teacher leader, became upset at the due process requirements. Duncan expressed dismay that a teacher's report of a discipline incident would be subject to such scrutiny. This made him feel unsupported. The investigator and I explained that until an investigation is done extenuating circumstances, consequences of harm and other factors that impact the situation are unknown. Because of the need to keep this information confidential, the reporting teacher may never know or fully understand the action that an administrator takes in resolving a discipline case. "However, serious disciplinary action, such as suspension, can be appealed," I informed Duncan. "Assistant principals and principals have their decisions subject to scrutiny as well," I pointed out. "Ultimately, a court of law can question the rightness or wrongness of disciplinary action. It is the administrator, not the teacher, who is subject to lawsuits and court action," I explained.

My hope was that these teachers could deepen their understanding of the student discipline code if they understood it in the bigger context of democratic rights. It was important to me that everyone understood what role they played, so that we could support one another. I did not want teachers to feel unsupported by administrators in matters of discipline. Therefore, it was necessary to inform them of the limitations of an administrator's authority and the laws that bind administrative action. Equally, I thought it important that teachers understand due process as an essential right in democratic polity. The same right employees enjoy is applicable to students as well.

Subsequently, I talked to team leaders about the need to think about the role school discipline played in the school. I, once again, felt it was important that everybody realize that there was no cookbook formula for matters of discipline. I had preached a sermon. I told them that if our goal is to help students to succeed, then the way consequences are doled out and what kind of consequences are given is key to an organization's values. I explained that suspension isn't always the answer because we cannot help students succeed if they don't attend school. I stated that we cannot help them succeed if they are out of control. I concluded that we must take the disciplinary action that is warranted and most likely to improve student success.

Struggling With Justice

Standing at the front desk, I was completing an important budget transaction with the secretary when I heard simultaneous calls on the radio. One message was from the security guard stating that I was needed in the office immediately. The second was a message urgently asking me to go to the high school because our students were throwing snowballs at the buses. The security guard again urgently asked me to come to the office. I remember thinking that the security guard needed me in the office at the high school where the snowballs were being thrown, which did not make sense, and I was wondering why the assistant principal over there was not dealing with it and also wondering why such urgency for snowballs? I screened my feelings of frustration at not being able to concentrate on the budget that was a real priority and responded that I was getting my coat and would be right over.

As I flew down the corridor to my office, I heard the security guard's voice call from the counselor's office that I had just passed: "In here." Confused because I thought he had been calling me from the Annex office regarding snowballs being thrown at buses, I entered the counselor's office. The first thing I saw was a gun on the counselor's desk with a pile of what looked like papers and some tissue next to it. Sitting quietly in a chair was a sixth grade boy.

The security guard gave an account of the situation. He said, "One of the teachers supervising bus duty called me on the radio as the students were loading the buses. She said she saw Tommy pull something that was metal out of his sock. I escorted Tommy to the office, asked him if he had a knife, and he said no. I then asked him if he would mind emptying his pockets, and here's what he was carrying," said the security guard, pointing to the haul on the desk. The bookkeeper ducked her head in the door to remind me that I was being paged to deal with the snowballs, saw the gun, and said: "Never mind!"

I picked up the gun, took it to my desk drawer and locked it. I then called the police and asked them to send a car. I returned to the office to wait. On the desk were ten bullets of varied sizes, one rock of crack cocaine wrapped up in tissue, a wad of smoking papers, and a roll of play money. I asked Tommy where he got the gun and the rest of the stuff. He said he didn't know. I asked him again where he got it. "Did you get it from someone at school?" I asked. "No," he said. "Someone from your neighborhood?" I followed up. He looked up at me for the first time. "Yes," he said. "What's his name?" I asked. "I don't know," Tommy said. "Are you afraid to tell me?" I asked. He nodded his head "yes."

I felt sorry for him. He was polite, shy and very scared. The counselor came in. I asked her to get me phone numbers of the parents, so I could talk with them. "Tommy," I asked, "did you show this gun to

anyone?" "No," he said. I believed him. I couldn't imagine my sixth graders not telling on someone who had a gun. The sixth grade team had been very effective this year in developing a culture of trust and caring with the students. I was sure Tommy was telling the truth. I reflected that most students bring guns to show off. Tommy was an exception. Was he planning to use it? "Tommy, why did you take the gun out of your sock?" I asked. He didn't answer. "Were you planning to use it?" I asked. "No," he said. "Why did you bring it to school?" I asked. "Some boy told me to hold it for him," he said. "He gave it to me this morning before I got on the bus. I'm supposed to give it back to him today."

"Did he give you the rest of the stuff as well?" I asked. Tommy nodded his head "yes."

"Do you know the rule against bringing a gun to school?" I asked. He looked at me and said "no."

Two police officers entered. I gave them the gun. They indicated that the gun, a twenty-five automatic, was loaded with a twenty-two magnum bullet. They told Tommy that whoever gave him the gun didn't know what they were doing. The gun would have misfired, and he would have been injured had he attempted to use the gun. I kept looking at Tommy, looking for some sign of feeling. There was none. In fact, he looked uncomprehending. He was fourteen years-old and still in the sixth grade. According to a psychological test evaluation, his verbal IQ was

borderline. He was not smart enough to deal with the streets. Yet my counselor told me that teachers reported that he ran the streets freely. My heart went out to this child. He was a victim, incapable because of his lack of natural intelligence of coping with a violent neighborhood and resisting its influence. He was easily exploitable and was possibly being used for a drug transaction. And now, he was being cuffed and arrested. The police didn't know his background. Their statements and demeanor indicated that they thought he was a common criminal.

We could find no phone number for his mother or his father. I finally got hold of his grandmother. When I described the situation, she seemed somewhat incoherent. She did not register alarm, just confusion. She sounded elderly, and I suspected her incoherence resulted from an inability to hear or think clearly. She indicated that Tommy lived with her, but that she didn't have custody. She didn't have a car, didn't offer to come, didn't know who could come. Poor Tommy. Finally, she was able to tell me where she thought his father worked. I looked up the phone number in the phone book and called. I was able to reach his father and explained that I was sorry to tell him this bad news, but his son was being arrested for possession of a loaded gun and crack cocaine. I reflected that the worst part of my job is calling parents and telling them news like this. There was silence. I continued. "Sir, the police will take Tommy to the detention center downtown. Can you meet them there?" "Yes," he said. "Can you

help us locate his mother?" I asked. "Yes, I'll try," he offered. A few minutes later, the phone rang. It was a woman, sobbing. I identified myself and asked, in a soft voice, if this was Tommy's mother. She sobbed that it was. I repeated the information I had given the father and asked if she wanted to speak to Tommy. I gave him the phone, but he only mumbled. I suspect all she did was cry.

Fortunately, by now, the halls were clear. I didn't want students to stare at Tommy in handcuffs under police escort. I walked with him to the police car. I tried to reassure him. He registered no affect at all.

That night I called two teachers on his team who had tried to work with him. The report they gave me was that there was no parent supervision for Tommy. Their repeated unsuccessful attempts to get parents to come in for a conference had frustrated them. Even though he didn't live in our school district, I was told that the teachers on the team had wanted him to stay in our school and had made special efforts to reach him. He was a member of our special Saturday Sports Club, in which students received tutoring and basketball coaching from former collegiate players. He never came, the teachers told me, because his parent did not bring him. He was always quiet and shy, they told me. He never got into trouble.

I knew without their telling me how they felt. They felt defeated and angry. They felt they had failed. Somehow they had lost this child. They

were having such success with the kids this year and now this. How did they miss the signs? How could he have a gun all day and they not know it? I tried to reassure them by telling them that I was glad he had been on their team. He had had a lot of good experiences that he would remember because of them. I pointed out that because of school board policy he would have to go to an alternative school.

At the team leaders meeting on Monday, I asked that all teams review with the students the policy on guns in school. I wanted all students to understand what Tommy did not know, that having a gun resulted in arrest and attendance at an alternative school.

I then asked my Youth Service Director to follow up on Tommy's case. "We need to make sure he gets social services," I told her. Maybe this is a cry for help, I wondered.

Ten days later, I received a call from a juvenile court worker. The court worker informed me that Tommy was arraigned in court alone. No parent ever showed up. What's more, the father told the court worker that he had a job and was too busy to meet with her. Mom had made an appointment to meet that morning but never showed. They had never gotten him back in school, she reported, frustrated. I thanked her for informing me and told her I would see what I could do. I asked my Youth Service Director to get any phone numbers she could find. I contacted our truant officer and asked him to investigate. I contacted a Central Office

colleague who worked with special education cases. I explained the situation and asked if he would follow up at the alternative school to see that this child got social services. I made contact with a colleague who worked in the community juvenile delinquency prevention program. I referred Tommy to him, and he assured me that he would include Tommy on the new Youth Board that was forming. I repeatedly called the number where I thought his mom lived but there was no answer. After three days, someone answered, and I left the message for mom to call me and that she must get Tommy back to school. She never called.

About a week later, I received a call from a Central Office contact who knew of my concern. She explained that I was to send Tommy's records to the alternative school immediately. Tommy and his mother were scheduled to have an enrollment meeting the next morning. The records were sent. I began to worry about Tommy at the alternative school. Will he be worse off? Will he learn more negative lessons than positive ones?

A week later a central office contact called to chat with me about my concern. She told me that, since Tommy was a special education student, I could claim that his handicapping condition (his low IQ) made him incapable of understanding the consequences of his actions that day. "You could stop him going to the alternative school if you really want to," she said. Oh, thank you very much for the ethical dilemma, I thought.

So, I had to reflect on the complexity of the case. On one hand, there was a clear victim, who was being sent to the alternative school because of his actions, the consequences of which he probably didn't understand. On the other hand, there were over six hundred students and adults in my school whose safety had been jeopardized by his actions. Who's to say it couldn't happen again, only with worse consequences? I knew I couldn't insure that I could keep Tommy safe from predators again. I could not insure that he wouldn't bring a gun again. I chose not to intervene. Instead I vowed to check up on him from time to time. I had to protect all the students.

I realize that kids like Tommy end up in prison because they fall through the cracks and never get the help they need in time enough to save them. I hoped this incident would be a wake up call in Tommy's life.

Tommy's situation weighed heavily on my staff and me. Helplessness and hopelessness were some of the feelings that this situation produced. We had no way to resolve our feelings.

Nurturing Those in Need

Dante approached me as I was standing in the hall. "Where's Ms Brown?" he asked. Ms Brown was the counselor. I noticed the sleeve of his jacket flapping open from his shoulder to his wrist. "Dante," I said. "Come in my office."

"Can you fix this?" he asked. He was pointing to his sleeve.

I looked at his jacket, which was threadbare and dirty. The entire sleeve had ripped open.

He laughed. "I got a blowout!" he said, because the jacket, which was black, flapped open around his shoulder. I had to laugh at his comical resilience.

"What happened?" I asked.

"I caught it in a nail," he said.

"Sure, Dante. We can sew this."

"Oh, good," he seemed satisfied.

"I heard you didn't come to Sports Club on Saturday." (We had a special tutoring and basketball program on Saturdays. The Saturday before he and his sister had come for the first time. They rode a city bus across town, taking two buses in ten degree weather and arriving at 8:30 in the morning). "I thought you liked the Sports Club," I prodded. "Why didn't you come?" I asked.

"Because we didn't have enough money for the bus," he said.

"Dante, if you'd like to come this Saturday, I'll give you money for the bus," I offered.

"You will?" he asked, excitedly. "And my sister, too?" he asked, thoughtfully.

"Your sister, too," I promised. "Just come see me before you leave on Friday."

"OK," he said.

I was paged to go to the gym right away, so I left. That night when I was reading the newspaper, I, suddenly, remembered Dante's jacket! Did anyone ever take care of his jacket, I wondered? I felt bad that I failed to take care of it myself as he had asked. I would have to remember to check on that tomorrow. I reflected that sometimes no matter how hard I try, I always end up disappointing someone because of competing demands on my time.

The next morning I called Dante to the office. We went to the Home Economics teacher, but she had no black thread. She said she would bring it the next day. I checked the next day. Dante forgot to bring his jacket. I checked the following day--the Home Economics teacher forgot the thread. Finally, I asked the counselor to oversee this challenge. On Friday, five days after the initial request, I asked Dante if the jacket was fixed, and he said that the counselor had sewn it.

I felt frustrated that I did not have time to focus enough on individual student needs. I was seldom available for Dante to tell me about his jacket; each day I would have to remember to pursue this concern. I reflected that when I was an assistant principal, students like Dante could always come in my office and get help.

In fact, just yesterday I saw some of those students who are at the high school next door now and with whom I had a "daily" relationship when

I was an assistant principal. In my present role as principal, I often visit the high school next door where part of my school is located. In the hallways, I'll hear a voice say "Ms Calvert." I look around and see a high school boy or girl who I mentally transform into their former twelve year old selves. These are "my kids"--now sophomores in high school. They are proud to tell me that they are on the football team or have good grades. They always wave to me and let me know how they are doing in high school. One recently told me that he was still a freshman because he didn't study but promised that he would "get it together." When I'm talking with them, I sense a familiarity and ease that I don't have with students now. As I stood there chatting with some of them yesterday, I drifted back to memories of my experiences with them.

I remembered their graduation ceremony during my last year as assistant principal, as I watched these students cross the stage to receive their diplomas. There were any number of them for whom I provided key support and "protection." Students that assistant principals deal with constantly need someone to "translate" back and forth between the system and the students. I would interpret the teachers' actions and expectations to these students. I would compel them to apologize to the teachers, often for being themselves--angry, rude, unthinking, and impulsive. I would, then, explain their problems to the teacher and suggest ways of handling them in more mutually productive ways. This constant kind of pastoral

work occurred continually with many of these and other students, so that at the end of their three years in middle school, I knew their families and them quite well. Their parents would often express gratitude because of the things I did not do to their children--suspend them, send them away, not give up on them.

I miss the familiarity with students I used to have.

Caring For the Soul

One day I promised myself that I would leave at a decent hour because I felt the onset of a cold. I was just finishing cleaning off my desk in preparation to leave when Noel entered. "Do you have a minute?" she asked. "Sure," I lied. I was eager to talk with Noel. I perceived that she was very stressed lately, exhibiting mood swings and increasing rigidity. This was not like Noel, and, frankly, I was worried about her. She was straining the many good relationships she had with others, including my own.

I listened as she explained that several incidents at school really bothered her. I let her describe in detail how certain situations stressed her. I empathized with how that must feel. Then, I told her that those kinds of stressors don't ordinarily become intolerable. I told her that I viewed such stressors as part of any work environment. However, I pointed out there are times in a person's life when other stressors are present, such as illness, marital conflict, and conflict with children. In that case,

additional stress at work can become intolerable. I suggested that this was happening to her. Although I didn't know what the problem was, I stated that I had observed mood swings that concerned me.

Noel seemed open. I had made it easier for her to tell me that she wanted to be relieved of some responsibilities because she needed to deal with her husband and children better. She explained that there were some conflicts arising and she had to get her priorities straight. I told her that I certainly understood and encouraged her to take care of herself. I suggested that Valentine's Day was around the corner and hoped that she would find time to spend with just her husband. "You have to take care of your soul," I told her. She smiled and said that that was a good idea.

I got home at my usual late hour, but I felt hopeful about this teacher who was a hard worker, very conscientious, and obviously struggling.

Teaching Effective Strategies

I stopped in to see Ronald, who worked with potential dropouts in the school. I asked him to give me an update of how his program was going. He explained that he was making home visits when students were absent nine times. I asked what his success rate was. He responded honestly that it was mixed. I wanted to see Ronald concentrate on two areas--incentives for students and teacher attitudes toward our most at-risk kids. I gave a quick lesson on strategies Ronald could use to improve his program. I described the need for him to go to team meetings and give background on

his students. "Hopefully, if teachers know the barriers these children face, they will become more empathetic. One way to increase student chances for success is to change teacher attitudes toward them. Another thing to do is to set up a weekly reporting system. Give them incentives for doing well on a weekly basis and get the parents involved."

"OK, I'll try," offered Ronald.

Admonishing Others

I received an "invitation" to attend a team meeting. I attended, suspecting that a group of teachers were unhappy because I had expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of supervision in their halls.

At the meeting, we discussed some non-issues. I waited for the real issue to be brought up.

At last, a teacher brought up the fact that she thought I unfairly criticized the teachers and her regarding hallway supervision. I paused and did not respond. Instead, I quickly processed some recent thoughts related to reflecting upon my leadership practice.

Recently, I had discovered through my reflections that I was quick to view teacher needs through my pastoral lens. Because I admire teachers and am very supportive of them, I enjoy seeing their growth and development. I like nurturing them. Yet, at times like this, I reflected I need to help them grow by challenging them.

After the teacher finished talking, I apologized by saying that if I hurt anyone's feelings, I was sorry. I acknowledged that, in their view, I may have overreacted. I felt it was best to own any mistakes I may have made and to take care of their feelings before I focused on the lesson I wanted them to learn and the changes I hoped they would undertake.

I then focused on the lesson I wanted to get across. "You need to know how this situation appears to me," I said. "Three times in recent weeks, I have been in this hallway and not all of you have been supervising. A fight occurred last week. Several days ago a teacher's property was destroyed. An escalation of misbehavior seems to be occurring that I am very concerned about. On several occasions, when I have personally tried to clear these halls I was the only one doing it even though some of you were standing in the doorways. Supervising requires more than standing in the doorway. When I have told students to clear the halls, they tell me they are on "break." As I have told you, there are no "breaks" allowed in our hallways. Because I do not see you correcting them, I assume you are permitting this behavior. I expect you to stop this behavior. I expect to see them go directly to their locker and the bathroom and directly to class. Consequences for the five or six who consistently ignore you need to be given." I was careful to say this in a neutral rather than accusatory tone.

The other day, when I had spoken to two of them about the lack of supervision in the hall, I was upset. I reflected that the tone in which you

supervise adults affects them as it does children. Compliance with directives is increased when given in a respectful, factual manner rather than in an emotional one.

I was glad, however, to be able to explain that the cause of my outrage was an attack on a teacher's property. A pair of eyeglasses belonging to a teacher had been stolen and smashed in the hall. That truly upsets me; it violates the trust and sense of community that needs to develop between teachers and students.

I was pleased to hear the teachers defend their students to me. Instead of complaining to me about how "bad" they are, this situation put the teachers in the role of taking up for their students and advocating for them. I felt good about this.

Affirming Others

As I was getting a spoon from the kitchen, I said hello to Tomika, who was standing in the kitchen during lunch time. "Are you one of their helpers?" I asked.

"Yes," said Tomika, "but I haven't been here to help lately. I've been in the hospital. I tried to kill myself." She said this readily and in a matter-of-fact tone.

I sat down in the kitchen and asked her to join me. I inquired about her troubles and asked if I could help. She assured me that things were better and that she and her mother were getting counseling.

A teacher who was upset about a student's behavior found me. Even though I wanted to continue my conversation with Tomika, who seemed ready to talk, I recognized that the teacher was about to explode. I told Tomika that I wanted her to stay in touch with me on a daily basis. "Will you let me know how you are each day?" I asked. She said she would.

After I solved the teacher's problem, I called the eighth grade counselor to discuss Tomika. Irv was informed about the case. I then talked with Sarah, the Youth Service Center Director, who had a very good relationship with Tomika. She explained that there was little family support for Tomika. Recognizing that Tomika was starved for attention, she involved her in several programs. I also talked with Tomika's teachers. I was aware that they worked with her extensively. She was one of their leaders and an aide for them as well.

I was comforted that so many adults at West were reaching out to Tomika. I realized that she had possibly taken the overdose to get attention rather than to end her life. Regardless, I wanted to make sure Tomika received the attention for which she was desperate.

The next day, as the school bell was ringing, Tomika stood in my doorway to say hello. A teacher was discussing a private matter with me. I let Tomika know that I could see her. Tomika had to leave to catch her bus before I could talk with her.

The following day I was out of the office in the afternoon. However, the next morning there was a scribbled note on my desk that I could not read. I finally discerned the words "OK" and "Tomika." Tomika had left me a note because she couldn't find me.

On subsequent days the notes continued. I would find them posted on my door and on my chair. The notes said things like "I'm OK"; "How are you doing?"; "I got a job babysitting"; "Do you need any help or anything?"; "I've got to bring my grades up." Whenever I was in Tomika's team area, we would talk a little until I got interrupted, usually by a staff member. Tomika informed me that she really enjoyed her babysitting job. One day she told me that she got three U's on her report card but that she had promised her dad the grades would improve.

One day she asked me to get her out of one class so she could catch up on work in another. I told her that with her leadership skills I expected her to successfully negotiate that for herself. I stood in the hall to give her tacit support as she pleaded with one teacher to release her from a class to allow her to work on her language arts assignment in another class. Though I couldn't hear the conversation, I admired Tomika's positive, friendly approach in negotiating. Later, she told me she had made a contract with the teacher to stay after school next week and work on the assignments she missed while she was finishing her language arts work. I

laughed and congratulated her. I knew I would enjoy working with her on a more consistent basis, but wistfully I knew I seldom had time for her.

Presiding at Functions and Affirming Others

This afternoon, I planned to attend the student academic team competition. It was scheduled to start in five minutes. Yesterday, a student on the team had asked me if I planned to come. I had said that I was coming. His invitation made me realize how important my symbolic presence was to the students. Just as the basketball players always wanted to know if I was coming to the game, I realized that part of my role as principal was to represent the whole school community and its support at school events. I had attended the last academic team competition. In fact, I had chosen to miss a district meeting related to grant funding for my school that I was expected to attend, so that I could take members of the team to the competition because the team sponsor was ill. Even though I felt conflicted because knowledge about the grant funding was very significant to systemic change in the school, I chose to be with my students instead. I wondered why so much of my time was spent away from them.

I was sick with the flu that day and felt feverish. However, I drove three students to the competition, stayed throughout the duration and really enjoyed my time with the academic team. After the competition was over, when the students were getting in my car, they began to joke around with me by asking if I was going to run another stop sign! I didn't know

what they were talking about! Naturally, I thought they were joking. They then insisted that on the way to the competition I had whizzed past a school bus, even though its stop sign was extended. I was impressed that they knew the rules of the road related to cars being required to stop for school buses. I honestly didn't recall the incident and knew that I did not disregard safety rules as a matter of practice. However, because they insisted that I did, in fact, run a stop sign, I acknowledged that I didn't feel very good and must not have been paying close attention. I felt embarrassed at such poor role modeling. I mumbled that I felt sick and didn't see the sign. They laughed, and so did I. I drove very carefully on the way back to school, mindful that I had obviously not been as alert as I needed to be because I was not feeling very good.

The next day I got a friendly call from the bus compound. One of my favorite bus drivers asked me why I was in such a hurry the day before when I ignored the extended stop sign of the bus she was driving and whizzed past her! I was so embarrassed, realizing that I must be the talk of the compound! Again, I mumbled that I had had a fever and didn't see the sign!

I reflected that the public persona of my role as principal required that I be in good form at all times. Interestingly, Chris, one of the passengers in my car the day I ran the stop sign, was the student who made a special effort to ask if I was coming to the competition today. I wondered

if my human error had made the students see me as someone like them. We now had a connection, I thought, because we laughed together at my error. I recognized that middle school students seldom laugh at themselves because of the self-consciousness that plagues them. I wondered if role modeling imperfection and acceptance of it might have made the students feel more empowered.

As I was leaving my office for the competition, Karen, a teacher, saw me in the hall and said that she wanted to come by and see me soon. She seldom expressed a need to see me. I remembered that her team members had recently expressed concern about her, saying that she had become unreliable and moody.

Like so many moments in a day, I felt conflicted by competing priorities. The students needed me to fulfill my symbolic or prophetic role by attending one of their functions. Yet, this teacher requested that I find time to see her; I anticipated that she was in need of counseling, part of my pastoral role. Even though she did not describe her need as an emergency, the fullness of my days could keep me from seeing her in the near future, I reflected. I also knew her as a somewhat timid person, not accustomed to asking for help. I feared that if I did not respond immediately that she would discount her need and explain away her problem as unimportant.

Thus, I reflected that even though attending the student academic team competition was important, the fact that this teacher, who seemed to

be having personal problems, reached out to me was a moment I needed to respond to immediately. I made a mental note to be sure to tell the academic team sponsor that an emergency kept me from the competition and to ask her to let the students know the reason for my absence.

I asked Karen to step into my office. We both sat down, and I explained that I had time to talk with her now. Karen explained that she didn't know how to tell me something, as a way of preparing me for bad news. I encouraged her to be frank. She then stated that she was thinking about asking for a transfer to another school; she said that it had nothing to do with me and explained that she appreciated all that I was doing for the school. She said that she just was not doing the kind of job that the students deserved and that she thought maybe she needed a change. Because I knew that she easily became self-deprecating, I sternly told her that I was the person who decided whether or not her performance was satisfactory and I assured her that it was. In fact, I reminded her of a note I had written to her recently in which I expressed how touched I was by the kind of teacher-student interaction on authentic life issues that I observed in her classroom. I felt the need to establish my high regard for her because it was evident to me that she did not have it for herself.

I paused to listen as she expressed her sense of failure and inadequacy. As I listened to her words, I became increasingly aware of what she was not expressing. All of her feelings of inadequacy were easily

articulated; yet, my experience told me that the most significant issues of awareness lie just underneath the surface of our conscious focus, often too upsetting and troubling for us to dwell on or even confront.

I was aware of some relational conflicts in the building that were probably contributing to Karen's sense of inadequacy. She was choosing to present her professional dilemma as someone who had possibly gotten into a rut and just needed a change.

After she finished her explanation of her problem, I concurred that ten years in one place may present a need for her to seek new challenges. I shared my own experience of having stayed too long in one place and experiencing burnout. I consciously wanted to link with her by identifying a commonality of experience. I felt the need to affirm her feelings and her rendition of the problem that she posed.

I accepted her explanation of her problem and expressed empathy and support for seeking solutions, possibly even a transfer. Then, I posed some questions to her. I felt the need to challenge her thinking because, frankly, her explanation did not square with my view of the facts. I asked her, politely and sensitively, if changes in friendships with others in the building were affecting her. She knew immediately that I was making reference to a distancing in a friendship with a fellow teacher that had occurred. She immediately insisted that that was not the problem. In fact, she admitted that I was not the first person to suggest this relational

problem as the cause of her recent depression. Her tone had an air of finality as if her dismissal of its being a possibility made it non-existent. She acknowledged that even though she was troubled about the ending of this relationship, the relationship was not the issue. She again insisted that she was not performing adequately and that she was unworthy to stay.

I then probed another source of possible conflict. I realized that she was burdened with a deep sense of inadequacy. Her team members were a high-powered, self actualizing group of individuals. I wondered how her own sense of inadequacy might be fueled by their capabilities and sense of confidence. I recognized that her team members were very different than she in that they were self assured and forceful, while she was indecisive and shy.

I, then, posed the possibility to her that she was comparing herself too much to her team mates and, thereby, making herself feel inferior. Karen responded in the affirmative, admitting that she wished she could be like Laura, who was always so organized. Karen shared that sometimes her team mates went too far in trying to "help" her. I noticed that Karen was very professional and, in no way, expressed negative feelings toward her team mates but did timidly express the wish that they would quit telling her what to do and how to run her life. I suggested that strong personalities, like those of her team mates, could be difficult to deal with for someone as gentle as she. She agreed, but expressed that she liked her

team. I reminded her that if she felt the need to grow she could always change teams, probing to see how honest she was being with me about feeling satisfied with her team. I pointed out that changing teams would be a less dramatic change than changing schools.

She acknowledged that changing teams might be an option and that changing schools might not solve her problem. In fact, she suddenly realized that she had a problem with not following through on commitments because she got overcommitted. If she went to a new school, she would repeat her pattern of volunteering for everything just to impress everyone and be worse off than now, she admitted. At least here she had friends who cared for her and understood her, she reflected.

I told her that it sounded like she needed to develop an appreciation for her own strengths and that she needed to develop an improvement plan for the areas of growth she wished to focus on. She agreed. Organization of her lessons was a major concern of hers. I pointed out that one team member that she admired was gifted in that area. She agreed. "Why not sit down and work together on your work?" I asked her. I identified several areas of strength that she possessed and pointed out that she could help her team member in those areas while her team member could help her in organizational skills. She agreed to approach her team member by disclosing her need and asking for help. I emphasized that if there was anything I could do to please let me know.

*The next day I was gratified to hear how well our academic team had* done. I also regretted that I had not been in attendance. I wondered how I could possibly be all the places I needed to be or maintain awareness of all the people and events that competed for my focus.

A Day in the Life: An Account of a Principal's Day

Reflections on Ministry

In thinking about my role as principal, I knew that ministry was central to my work. I had come to understand that ministry was comprised of two chief functions: pastoral care--supporting, caring, healing, and nurturing others; and prophetic engagement--witnessing, challenging, confronting, and aligning beliefs, values, behaviors, and actions.

Recently, I reflected that most of my experiences described pastoral roles. I was struck by this discovery and somewhat dismayed. Did this mean I was a "nice boss" but provided no vision? No real challenge? I realized that I focused a great deal on developing trust. Was this due to my leadership style, or to the needs I sensed at this school, or both? My observations indicated that this school staff needed an administrator with whom they could develop trust because of their traumatic history.

I realized uncomfortably that, except for my weekly "sermon" in the staff newsletter, I had sought few opportunities to be prophetic during my eighteen months as principal. Many opportunities presented themselves, but I had to admit that I did not seek as many as I had assumed. I began

to reflect about not only the meaning of this new awareness but also about what I was going to do about it.

My Monday morning teacher team meetings were a time, I now realized, where I could be more prophetic. Team meetings availed me the opportunity to address the key formal leaders of the school to communicate priorities and concerns. I believed that the reason I never used this time for establishing vision was because "administrivia" comprised most of the meeting and, besides, the meeting occurred at 7 AM on Monday mornings. My staff would probably look at me with glazed eyes if I tried to fire them *up the first thing Monday morning! But, maybe not .... I decided to continue* further reflection about this idea when one of my staff entered, looking rather frustrated.

We chit chatted a little, and then I shared with him my reflections on the fact that many staff members seemed to need support and nurturing at our school. I said this because I sensed that he was feeling a little distraught. He acknowledged that this did seem to be the case.

He admitted: "I'm afraid I won't be able to accomplish some school reform initiatives that are important because too few people seem ready to address them. Teachers here hold expectations of students that are too low and do not challenge them enough."

I agreed. "I've been thinking about the sense of powerlessness that I observe in many staff here," I said. "It's as if they are unsure of themselves and, therefore, can not lead the students," I said.

My colleague agreed. "I wonder if powerlessness and healing in this school are related," I said, thinking about a book a colleague had recently described that relates the two.

"I'm amazed at the level of stress here," my colleague observed.

"I believe that the stress characteristic of working in an urban middle school can put someone over the edge if they lack support and nurturing at home," I said. "A good number of my staff seemed to be managing that edge quite closely lately," I offered. In most of the cases I knew about, the event underlying this stress seemed to be serious home problems of staff, such as domestic conflict or divorce. In a number of instances, I had received reports that staff's spouses wanted them to transfer because the teachers were "constantly" working and the school situation was taking too much out of them.

My colleague then said: "I'm feeling very stressed. I just can't stay focused, get on top of my work or feel like I'm getting anywhere. How can you improve school curriculum and raise standards when teachers feel so overwhelmed and powerless?" he asked.

"Let me share with you how I manage my job," I said. "First of all, I struggle with the same issues you have raised. Basically, I need to keep

people constantly moving toward creating a climate for student success--and, then, somebody pulls the fire alarm! I'm often asked to respond to crises, real or imagined, and often I have to rethink my priorities because situations change so quickly. The crisis I have come prepared to meet today can just as easily dissipate, escalate, or pale in comparison to a new one right around the corner."

"Sergiovanni described the importance of finding the right mindscape for the context you find yourself in," I said. "He compared the efforts of school administrators to the efforts of someone kicking and shoving a giant amoeba from one corner of the street to the other. The movement is usually forward with some rolling backward from time to time, but always in a painfully slow process. Knowing that the context of my day pulls me in myriad directions, I can count on a good day when I come prepared with just two things that I promise myself I will do that day. It's not a lot in the scope of things to do, but it's movement in the direction that I choose to go."

I then shared with my colleague my interest in reflective practice. I told him that I was capturing my own experience by studying it and suggested he might want to do the same. "It may help reveal some ways to help you prioritize or see what impact you are having," Maybe a key to helping staff handle stress is to find a way to help them experience meaning in their work, I thought.

He agreed that he might start to keep a journal to help him get a handle on his work. It seemed my colleague left with a quicker step.

After he left I kept wondering about powerlessness. The literature on addiction points out that powerlessness can often be a copout. It can be a way of avoiding responsibility. You don't have to be responsible if you can't do anything about a problem. It's the parents, the kid, the neighborhood! Hmmm....I began hearing my sermon for The Wildcat.

Was it possible that I had come to heal a school that wanted to stay sick? Getting well means there are no more excuses. I had been *approaching most of the teachers in a pastoral sense because I viewed many* of them as powerless and needing support to get strong. Now another possibility occurred to me. Were they powerless and comfortable? In that case, would not a prophetic approach be more appropriate?

Meanwhile, Sally, my co-worker who was managing the cafeteria while my manager was in the hospital, appeared in the doorway looking distraught. Sally reported that she had just been notified that the business division of Food Service had decided to downsize our kitchen staff by one-fourth because we were not selling enough lunches. (Even though one of my responsibilities is to supervise the cafeteria personnel, I have no authority over the business operations, which are focused on cost-cutting, often at a detriment to personnel.) Sally was doing a great job substituting as

manager. The challenge of managing the cafeteria was hard enough without being confronted by a reduction in staff.

I expressed my concern and asked what I could do to help. Sally explained her wish to be allowed to restructure her staff so she would lose one fewer employee. I said I understood what she wanted and would plead her case. I had already called last week and fought to keep these cuts from occurring. Apparently, this was an annual districtwide cut, so I knew we would suffer some. My role, given the situation, would be to negotiate the best deal for my staff. As I was leaving to go make the call, Sally informed me that the kitchen staff were returning this evening to play Bunko! I smiled and said that I thought that that was wonderful. "The staff that plays together stays together," I said, somewhat tritely because I was too touched for words. I reflected on how ministerial Sally's leadership was. In the face of this demoralization, she had created a time to party together. It was a way to transcend. A real act of spirit.

Affirming Others

One of my two "to-do's" today was to provide support to Mae, who had cried twice in the last two weeks about a personal problem that she did not disclose. She had seemed down for some time, and the tears were alarming me. The first time this happened I immediately sought out two colleagues, shared with them my concern over her fragile state, and suggested that they be supportive. I had hoped that they could get her to confide in them.

Since then I had made an effort to be supportive in ways I could be. I visited her classroom and complimented her on her work. I responded quickly to a request of hers and granted it. Today, I intended to simply be friendly and say hello. I first went into the library to "bum" some coffee from the librarian. I gave her my periodic packet of coffee in return for a cup. She invited me to have one of the still-warm bagels that Mae had brought in. I relished one and thought that this gave me a great way to simply say thank you.

I found Mae in the cafeteria where many students were eating breakfast in our breakfast program. I thanked her for the bagel and said I thought it was so thoughtful of her to bring them. She beamed. Then, I gently touched her arm and said that I had been thinking about her and hoped things were going a little better.

She quickly became tearful and shaken and said, no, things were not better. She said "it was one of those times in life one has to get through and just deal with." Tears rolled down her cheeks. I invited her to come talk, but she said that she was OK. I responded that I respected that she was a very private person but that I felt she needed to share her burden with someone. "Do you have someone you can talk to about this?" I asked. "My family," she replied, "but I don't want to bring them into this. I just have to accept it and deal with it. I'm a person who does things this way." I said I understood, but, if she ever felt the need, our district provided counseling

services free for three visits if pressures create an emergency. "Just let me know and I'll arrange it if you like or if there's anything else I can do," I said.

I returned to the office to return a phone call concerning Tommy, a boy who had earlier been suspended for bringing a gun. I was informed that he would be going to the alternative school the following day and that his records needed to be sent there immediately. I was then informed that my counselor had made some "major" errors on the required special education paperwork which had accompanied the suspension. I purposely bit my tongue and listened politely to the list of her errors. I asked if a copy could be faxed to me so I could sit down with her and teach her the proper procedure.

I bit my tongue to remind me not to speak my mind. The paperwork is a legal document and was important. However, I knew we were dealing with a loaded gun, ten bullets, crack cocaine, and a scared little boy in handcuffs that day. I forgave my counselor her error immediately and would, in some indirect way, make sure she learns the lesson she needs so as not to repeat the mistake. What central office administrators think is a major problem seldom has to do directly with kids.

I next studied my enrollment projections for next year, did a quick projection of my budget, and felt somewhat relieved that I may only lose one

teacher. (A forecasted birth rate decline will likely cause all middle schools to lose students next year.)

I then stopped by a special education teacher's classroom and apprised her of my need for a favor. I explained that a transfer student would need to be placed in her class today, putting her over class size, and, when the counselor returns tomorrow, she would move one of her students to another special education unit, putting her back in compliance with class size. The teacher readily agreed to be a team player and help out.

I spent the rest of the morning in sixth grade classrooms, listening to personal narratives being read aloud by students, showing one group how to do the one mime trick I know in an effort to drum up interest in our student movie (auditions are next week), and observing students complete a Seek and Find on Jesse Jackson as part of our African American culture unit. I observed one class because the teacher needs help and support in dealing with some of our most needy students.

I heard loud screaming next door and immediately responded. A student discipline incident (the assistant principal had a doctor's appointment) resulted in my contacting both parents and developing a plan for behavior management.

Next, on my to-do list was to respond to an issue that involved students' needs and fairness. A staff member, who was doing an excellent job preparing instructional materials for a group of students assigned to

her, was needed more critically in the classrooms helping with students than preparing materials. I was aware that she would be upset if I reduced her planning time and required her to increase her time in classrooms. However, the students needed more staff at that period of the day because of increased discipline problems. In fairness, colleagues with the same job description were in classrooms working with students. She needed to do the same.

I approached her with a prophetic lens. I sensed that she was not in need of nurturing or solace. I sensed that she would respond to justice and service. I respected her a great deal and felt confident that, if I laid out the issue, she would respond.

We spent twenty minutes processing advice that she requested on how to deal with her own daughter on a school problem at another school. Why should I be surprised that I'm being pastoral again? I had been so prepared to be prophetic! Finally, I was able to present my issue. At first, Dean was very uncomfortable with this idea. She expressed her need to get work prepared and xeroxed. I asked questions about her work in an effort to understand her needs. I pointed out that much of that work could be done by aides. I then had an idea. Since I was going to send her into classrooms to assist teachers with students, they could just as easily send students to her. Students who had problems in those classes could benefit from the one-on-one attention while the rest of the class would be more

productive with the disruptive ones removed. We could even have these students be her aides and help her accomplish her work. Since many of them had reading problems, she could require them to "evaluate" her student assignments beforehand and, then, help design, cut out, create, and give feedback on student work in reading. We both liked this compromise and considered it a win-win solution.

I had to leave the school for a meeting with our school leadership team and a similar team from another school. We are meeting as critical friends as part of a school reform initiative sponsored by our district. I sat back and let my teachers present our plan and exchange information with colleagues on the other team. The session was affirming for both schools. I then found myself thinking about my pastoral work again and the conversation this morning with my colleague who was present at the meeting. I told our friends from the other school that we had a chronic problem. Most of the staff in our Annex, our other building, suffered from a sense of disconnectedness and chronic anxiety. I reflected to myself that two of the eight teachers over there had developed serious foot problems. Three members of our "annex family," who were present, responded immediately and agreed with me. I reported that all year I had spent energy trying to solve problems "over there" and I was coming to the conclusion that the problem was the situation itself. Once again, the "principal as minister" metaphor helped me reflect about the challenge of

building community, a key focus of mine. After participants from the other school drifted away, we began talking about the forecasted enrollment for next year. I expressed my concern about continued loss of staff. Then, in a "what if" fashion, I said: "Of course, one opportunity available with fewer staff is that we might fit into one building." We feverishly played around with moving rooms. I wrote down the plan on my napkin. This idea looked possible. One team, represented at the table, would agree to stay in the Annex but would like it if it was their "own space." If we could arrange the schedule so that they would have to walk over to the main building only once instead of twice, they would be happy. The other team would move over to the main building, while two special education units would move to the Annex and be attached to the team over there.

I thought to myself that this conversation had begun by my ruminating again about the pastoral need to heal the annex. What had emerged was a very feasible plan for restructuring our building!

Eliciting Faith

I arrived home around 7:30 pm. After dinner, the phone rang. A new teacher was calling to ask for advice about an incident that had happened the day before. A student had thrown part of a stapler at her and hit her in the face. "Should I press charges?" she asked. She related that she had asked a lot of teachers and wanted to know what I thought. I told her that it was her decision and that I would support whatever she wanted to do. I

shared two of my personal experiences. "When I was an assistant principal," I said, "a student threatened to go to the In School Suspension room without my permission. I gently tried to dissuade him, and I blocked the door. He symbolically slapped me in the face. It didn't hurt. He meant no physical harm. He just wanted to display power. I didn't move nor did I physically respond to protect myself. I could tell that he was not angry or out of control, and I believed he would comply with my request to leave. I felt the need to model non-violence because I always told students not to strike back when someone hit them. Yes, he hit me. I did not press charges or suspend him. He was a child with behavior problems. He did no harm," I explained.

"On the other hand, last year I did press charges against a boy who threw me aside when I was trying to break up a fight and with whom I had to struggle along with another female staff member and a male student to keep him from hurting another student. I knew that this student had been expelled from another school system for fighting. If he didn't get help now, I expected he would be in prison in a few years. I pressed charges because the court could mandate counseling and anger control therapy, which they did," I finished.

"You've helped a lot," said Anne. "I don't think this student has a problem; I don't know that she meant to hit me in the face. I think it's just a case of impulse. I don't think I'll press charges."

Then Anne cleared her throat. "Did you hear what happened today?" she asked. "About my glasses getting stolen off my desk? A teacher saw two male students stomping on them in the hall. They're broke--my $200 glasses!" She was justifiably upset.

I was saddened to hear this, both for her and for the students who were demonstrating such poor adaptive skills. "I assure you they will be dealt with severely, and if the parents don't pay then you should go to court!" I said. "I realize you must be hurt and dismayed. Remember, when I hired you I said that this would be a difficult assignment? Because of problems with a former teacher, these students are testing you. More severely than I expected! Teachers do not normally get their property stolen and broken in this school, I assure you. What's really going on is they are trying to see if you really care enough to stay. Everybody abandons these kids, so why should they care? They are afraid to trust you because you may leave, too," I said.

"I know. One of them wrote on her paper that she wanted the former teacher. I took that as a sign that things were going the right way!" Anne laughed.

"You've had a rough two days, Anne. I never expected them to do this. Would you like Irv, the counselor, to come in and help with that class? He'd be glad to give you some support," I offered.

"Sure," said Anne.

"You need to rent a copy of "Stand and Deliver," I suggested. You need to see yourself in that perspective. They are afraid to get close, to trust you. You have to tough it out, show them they can't scare you away. Show them they're worth sticking it out for. Keep showing them that you care," I said.

Finally, I got to say something prophetic, about the importance of believing in these kids and seeing beyond their present condition, I thought to myself.

"I'm not going anywhere. I'm sticking it out," Anne promised.

"You're a tough lady. Next year will be so much better. Just try to survive and know that the worst will be over sooner than you think. I really admire you," I said.

The Pulpit: The Wildcat Weekly

Probably the most consistent route to reflection was the Reflections column of my Wildcat Weekly Staff Newsletter, which I wrote every week. The weekly staff newsletter, The Wildcat Weekly, became a consistent ritual of communication for me with the staff. Most of the newsletter consisted of a calendar of events, announcements of upcoming events or deadlines, and other newsworthy subjects.

However, I began each issue with a "Reflections from Jan" column, in which I attempted to set priorities, institutional values and focus on the mission of our school. This column served as a kind of pulpit for me in

which I attempted to influence staff attitudes and spirit. (An example of the Wildcat Weekly from my first year as principal can be found in the Appendix).

The key themes that emanate from the Reflections column can be categorized into pastoral and prophetic themes. Several themes emerged that are more closely aligned with the priestly function of ministry. I will discuss each category and provide examples from the Reflections column that served as guideposts for the direction of my practice.

Pastoral

The pastoral function of ministry comprises ministerial tasks and skills that focus primarily on service to individuals.

Affirming others. Showing appreciation of staff efforts was a key ministerial task I undertook. In the Wildcat, I would frequently affirm staff by thanking them: "I appreciate each and every one of you (Wildcat Weekly, Sept. 6, 1994).

I also used the column as a vehicle to encourage the staff to affirm the students:

> When students believe in themselves and have goals and expectations, they will perform. Let's be proactive by continually giving students the message that they are somebody and that they have just as much talent as anybody else. When we take students to task for not living up to our expectations, we need to keep reminding them that we believe in them and we will not accept less than what we know they can do. (Wildcat Weekly, Oct. 24, 1994).

At Thanksgiving, I expressed my gratitude in being part of this community. By this time, I sincerely felt a sense of purpose and calling at West:

> There are countless times during each day and each week I find myself telling someone about the staff at West, for whom I am grateful. I realize that I haven't told you enough how very much I admire your dedication, your risk-taking, your creativity and, most of all, your caring for the varied needs of kids and families we serve. (Wildcat Weekly, Nov. 21, 1994)

I shared with the faculty my agreement with a newspaper article that pointed out that teachers feel unappreciated and have very difficult work. I expressed my need for them to know that I appreciated them: "I thank you each day for the hard work you do and am grateful for the quality of classroom instruction I see daily at West (Wildcat Weekly, Dec. 5, 1994).

Whenever we examined test scores, I realized that the hard working staff at West could succumb to despair if they used them as the only barometers of success. I used my Reflections column to counter the negative impact that test scores had on the staff:

> Ultimately, our mission is to focus on what's best for kids, regardless of test scores. There's so much you do everyday that can never be measured by scores. Don't ever forget the difference you make in the lives of the children you teach! (Wildcat Weekly, Feb. 13, 1995)

When West was the site of a regional academic competition, I used my Reflections column to single out the individuals who had helped to make this event a success. I consciously included our custodial staff because the classified staff members seldom get the recognition and affirmation they

deserve: "I want to specifically recognize the individual efforts that made our "team" effort outstanding" (Wildcat Weekly, Feb. 27, 1995).

In another issue, I recognized the individual efforts of staff who had made special contributions to student life on weekends: "Special thanks to the staff who planned or participated in the Neighborhood Cleanup on Saturday. Special thanks also to Jenny and Martin (pseudonyms), who spent the day at Kings Island with our cheerleaders and their parents" (Wildcat Weekly, May 22, 1995).

Sharing self. Although all of the reflections in my column were based on my own experience, sometimes I was explicit about a particular experience that I felt was connected to our work at West:

> My reflections will be brief because I just finished a take-home exam for U of L, and my mind is empty. However, tonight I wonder what the exam showed I really know or don't know. Assessment of learning is very complex. Remember the feeling you had when the professor made you spend a lot of time on "dumb stuff"? I wonder if that's how our kids feel? (Wildcat Weekly, Oct. 17, 1994)

On the occasion of the twenty-fifth wedding anniversary of some friends of mine, I was reacquainted with people I had hardly seen since elementary school. I reflected upon how significant a kinship I still felt with these people, with whom I shared a formative time in my life. Thinking about the upcoming graduation of eighth graders at West, I realized that my students were the same age I was when I came to know these people. I shared these thoughts in my Reflections:

> Friday night I gathered with some folks I came to know when I was in the sixth - eighth grade. I reflected on how significant the connections we made then still are to us today. It made me realize that the events that happen in children's lives at West are the "stuff" of a lifetime later on. Even you can't assess how significant those events are. But, thankfully, you made them happen! (Wildcat Weekly, May 30, 1995)

In a June, 1995, issue of the Wildcat Weekly, I shared my summary thoughts of how I had experienced my first year at West and the gratitude I felt for all the staff efforts that had been made:

> I can't believe that it is the close of my first year at West. It has been a swiftly paced year for me - so much to learn and to accomplish in what never seemed to be enough time. Because so many of you have provided constant support, guidance and affirmation, this has been a very special year for me. You are a special group of people, who work tirelessly with very needy children. I admire you very much, and I am proud to serve here . (Wildcat Weekly, June 3, 1995)

Healing others. I used my column to make appeals to teachers to minister to students who were needy and troubled. For example, I told them that: "Recognizing we have needy, mostly non-traditional students calls for sensitive, resourceful teaching that 'intrigues' them into being successful. Our students know how to fail. How can we help them be successful?" (Wildcat Weekly, Oct. 31).

I focused on the special needs child in my Reflections column:

> While surely there are many children with disabilities who need special education, for many others, learning difficulties may be no more than learning differences. They may come and they may go. Learning difficulties...have a thousand causes...hunger, lack of sleep, illness, drugs, alcohol, listening to parents' fight, having no parents, abuse...LIFE...Let us teach to the individual differences of these types of children without

> labels, empowering teachers to help children learn to compensate for their weaknesses, not use them as excuses for failure. (Wildcat Weekly, Mar. 6, 1995)

Despite all the hard work at school reform we had undertaken my first year at West, the only newsworthy story that the media focused on was the fact that a student brought a gun to school. Television cameras awaited the emergence of the student with the police. The newspaper ran a story on it as well. I felt that the staff needed a healing sermon in my next Reflections column:

> I regret that all the good things you do everyday are not front page news. Hats off to us because we deserve to be honored for the good that we do--as well as for the problems that confront us daily. It is not news to us that our school reflects the problems of our society. We're here at West because we're the kind of people that remain triumphant in the face of adversity. Everyday, we struggle to make children's futures brighter and to make their faces brighter. (Mar. 14, 1995)

In a subsequent column, I quoted a letter from a researcher at the Center for the Study of Testing, Evaluation and Educational Policy at Boston College (K. Cress, personal communication, Mar. 3. 1995), that was sent to a central office contact in our district:

> I had the opportunity to visit with the faculty of the West Middle School, and help them to plan their state-required transformation plan...Let me again stress how impressed I was with the planning work of the teachers and principal at West Middle School. (Mar. 20, 1995)

I quoted this letter to counter the negative impact of the gun incident the week prior. To make my point, I followed up with these comments:

"Just wanted you to know that, despite local TV stations, the good word is getting out about West! (Wildcat Weekly, Mar. 20, 1995)

Prophetic

Establishing vision. When the test scores were published in the local newspaper, West Middle School had the lowest scores of any middle school in the district. I felt the need to focus staff on the importance of improving our teaching and learning strategies. However, I felt the greater emphasis should be on the mission of serving youth:

> You and I know that there is more to school success than test scores. The creation of a positive climate where kids develop and grow is true success. That's the real goal and we are well on our way in achieving it! (Wildcat Weekly, Sept. 19, 1994)

Keeping the staff focused on the mission of serving all students is not easy. My Reflections column became a significant way to remind them of their purpose:

> But many of our children today are not "listening". Conditions of poverty, violence, abuse and asocial values have seriously harmed them. Curiosity, creativity, and industry give way to violence, shame and despair. We call them the "marginal" student, and they walk the halls of every school. Every team at West knows which ones they are. How do we teach them when they will not listen? Or won't even come to school?...The challenge in our school and a key characteristic of the extraordinary school is to keep the lights shining for the Bryans while we struggle to find the right "connection" for the marginal student. (Wildcat Weekly, Oct. 3, 1994)

Frequently, I commented on the importance of the quality of teaching and learning for students, our key mission: "When learning is meaningful,

one is enlivened by it. I wish it could always be that way--for me, for you and for our students" (Wildcat Weekly, Oct. 17, 1994).

Upon return from the National Middle School Conference, I shared my enthusiasm for our mission with the staff:

> Even though I was at the conference only one day, I came home inspired by the importance of our mission. The quality of so many young lives can be enhanced by us. And if not by us, probably, by no one. And if not now, probably never. I learned about programs in schools with populations like ours that helped make them successful. Let's commit to getting better and better. Our kids deserve the best! (Wildcat Weekly, Nov. 7, 1994)

In my column I tried to communicate a sense of change that hopefully signaled a new day. From time to time, I reminded the staff of their critical role in bringing about this change in vision:

> From my point of view, we, at West, are at a critical moment. We must demonstrate to ourselves and to others who believe in us that we want the best for our students and are willing to work hard to achieve it. As we enter this renewal process, I ask each of you to commit to our mission of serving students and families at West. The level of your commitment is the real measure of student success at West. (Wildcat Weekly, Jan. 30, 1995)

Part of establishing vision requires that one communicate what the vision of the future looks like. In one column, I reflected on an article I had read to depict my vision of our school:

> Ultimately, the importance of fostering "educational aspirations" in students proves to be far more powerful than academic achievement. How do schools foster resiliency? By providing a caring environment, holding high expectations and encouraging youth participation and involvement, schools like ours can help kids be "resilient" rather than be "at risk". It's

> up to us to create the kind of school that best serves our kids. (Wildcat Weekly, Apr. 24, 1995)

Eliciting faith. The daily grind of the school environment often keeps faculty from connecting with the importance of their work. One ministerial theme I tried to reinforce was the need to believe in the importance of the work at West and its impact on kids. For example, I encouraged them to "think about how you made a difference today. Remember, each of you are the difference in many of our kid's lives" (Wildcat Weekly, Sept. 12, 1994).

One of the key ways I used to motivate teachers was to remind them of their high calling, as in the Oct. 3, 1994 issue of the Wildcat:

> Working with children who are curious, creative, inventive and industrious gives me an immediate sense of participating in something much larger than myself. Imparting the knowledge and values that have guided civilization through the ages is the true calling of a "teacher". When the learner is engaged and "listening", as in Bryan's case, the teacher can "see the light turn on"; the teacher knows that cherished knowledge and values will live on through this child and many others. (Wildcat Weekly, Oct. 3, 1994)

> Teaching is a calling that renders both ourselves and those we serve ever new and changing. (Wildcat Weekly, Nov. 21, 1994)

Sometimes in my reflections I would address the difficulty of achieving our mission to serve children in the face of overwhelming poverty and violence. To offer strength and faith to the staff, I quoted a poem, somewhat serving as a prayer:

> Perhaps, the ability to influence the future of these children will have the greatest positive impact on civilization. A poem by Adrienne Rich comes to mind as my response to these questions:

"My heart is moved by all I cannot save:
So much has been destroyed
I have to cast my lot with those
Who age after age, perversely,
With no extraordinary power,
Reconstitute the world." (Oct.3, 1994)

Building community. In an effort to develop professional collaboration, I referenced Linda Darling-Hammond's article, Creating Accountability in Big City Schools, (1991) which stressed the importance of professional accountability based on learner-centered and knowledge-based outcomes rather than bureaucratic accountability based on uniform procedures. I encouraged the faculty to work toward collaboration:

> Teacher isolation in classrooms has traditionally worked against collective questioning and reflection. We now have the opportunity through daily team time to create a climate of professional accountability in which we struggle together to establish best practices in our teaching strategies, interpersonal approaches for particular students, meaningful curriculum and assessment outcomes and increased partnership with parents. The use of our time to improve teaching and learning will be the measure of our professional accountability ... We've begun to develop a positive team spirit here at West. Let's all work especially hard to be supportive of one another. (Wildcat Weekly, Aug. 29, 1994)

When I encouraged the staff to celebrate at Chi Chi's, I focused on the importance of building community: "Let's get to know one another outside these walls and have some fun" (Wildcat Weekly, Sept. 27).

Sometimes I quoted from other sources to underscore the importance of community and collaboration in schools, as in the case of excerpts from an article in Education Week:

> There are, however, schools across the country where the culture is changing and nurtures very different habits. Teacher collaboration has become the norm within the school. Teachers can't imagine not teaching with a team of colleagues, not developing and constantly refining their own curriculum. (Wildcat Weekly, Dec. 5, 1994)

Another example of using journal articles to stimulate thought in staff occurred when I disseminated an article from Education Week for the staff to read in teams:

> My reflections this week are to ask you to read and respond as teams to an article I will give to team leaders regarding ways to build a collaborative climate in a school. There are "stuck" schools and there are schools that are progressive. Creating an atmosphere of growth for everyone - students and teachers - is essential in excellent schools. (Wildcat Weekly, (Jan. 9, 1995)

Priestly

Giving blessings. The Wildcat afforded me an opportunity to reinforce the positive efforts that staff demonstrated. It also gave me the opportunity to establish expectations by focusing on those positive efforts:

> I see most of you keeping your thirty students quiet in the halls and on break as your contribution to the overall school climate. I see more hands-on learning activities and more writing in your classrooms. I see positive affirmation of kids all around the building. (Sept. 27, 1994)

At special seasons of the year, I gave a special remembrance of the staff and their families in my reflections as a form of blessing:

> May you, your family and friends enjoy a happy and bountiful holiday! (Wildcat Weekly, Nov. 21, 1994)

> May you and your loved ones have a happy holiday season. May you renew your spirit and return invigorated, excited and full of promise! (Wildcat Weekly, Dec. 12, 1994)

> I hope you had a wonderful week. Time with family and friends is the kind of renewal we need at this time of year. (Wildcat Weekly, Apr. 3, 1995)

Celebrating. West Middle school is a stressful environment. This school had the lowest middle school test scores in our district, one of the highest suspension rates, high staff and student turnover, and a high number of staff and students exhibiting stress and illness. I felt the need to build staff morale by finding ways to celebrate our efforts at improving this school: "It's time to celebrate and applaud your effort! You are really making a difference at West. There's only one thing to do--meet for Happy Hour at Chi Chi's this Friday after school to celebrate!" (Wildcat Weekly, Sept. 27, 1994)

In one Reflections column, I called upon the teams of teachers to begin celebrating birthdays and other occasions to enhance staff members' sense of belonging. Building community was a key emphasis of mine at this school, and I viewed an increase in celebrating as a way to enhance community:

> Membership in a school only comes from a sense of belonging. Lately, I've been wondering how we could improve ways to help others belong here at West. When a new student or staff member becomes a part of our school, what could we do to make them feel a part of our team? What could each classroom teacher do? Each team? Each administrator? Birthday celebrations are a way of appreciating others ... I'd like all teams to discuss the idea of creating some celebrations together. (Wildcat Weekly, Jan. 23, 1995)

As shown in the excerpts presented above, my weekly Reflections column in The Wildcat Weekly served to provide focus for me and, hopefully, for the staff. I used the column intentionally as a kind of pulpit from which I shared my thoughts, experiences, frustrations and hopes regarding the mission of teaching children.

## Celebrations: The Retreat

### Building Community

Building community was my key focus my first year. The staff was divided by two separate buildings and had had a traumatic series of years caused by moving from a spacious facility in an inner city neighborhood to this new location with an inadequate building and successive administrators. I believed that culminating the year with a staff retreat would help develop a more cohesive atmosphere. To do this, I had to sell the staff on the idea. Teacher union requirements necessitated that we hold a vote on my request to have a retreat. A two-thirds majority of the teachers had to concur.

In our April faculty meeting I proposed the retreat to the staff. To conduct it on closing day, as I proposed, they would have to get all their grades and end-of-year paper work completed during the last week of school. Because our computerized grade reporting requires that grades be turned in before the last day of school anyway, we agreed that getting grades finished would be possible. After lengthy discussion in which

teachers proposed different ways that they could accomplish their end-of-year tasks, we voted on the retreat. Almost unanimously, we agreed to have an end-of-year retreat.

Sarah, Director of our Youth Service program, and I collaborated on planning the retreat. Since my goal was community building, she proposed that we plan to engage in team building activities, such as a ropes course. While I thought her idea was worthy, I doubted that the staff was ready for it. I suggested that we ask the staff development committee for input. They indicated that "touchy, feelly stuff" was not going to be successful. Irv, one of our counselors, particularly expressed dislike of such strategies. Sarah, our Youth Service Coordinator, jokingly pointed out that counselors were supposed to like such kinds of "people" contact.

Sarah agreed to develop less threatening team building games to be conducted outdoors. I pointed out that there were some severely allergic people who would not be able to participate. I offered to conduct an indoor activity.

I also wanted the staff to have an opportunity to work on conflict resolution. Sarah connected me with a specialist in mediation conflict. I met with him one morning and we planned a three-hour session that would introduce staff to conflict resolution as well as building confidence and appreciation for each other.

The week before the retreat took place I received a call from a representative of the Search Committee of another school. "The Committee would like you to apply for the principalship at the South School," he said. He told me that I was one of the two people in whom the Committee had expressed interest. I indicated that I was flattered at the suggestion but that this was very poor timing. As he knew, I had just begun my principalship at West and my professional ethic compelled me to stay. I did tell him I would think about it.

All week, I thought about the offer. The other school was located near my home. Currently, I drove 25-30 minutes each way to school. The other school was largely upper middle class and had a lot of community support. My school was comprised of 70% at risk students with little parent support and high staff turnover, mitigating against efforts at school reform because the staff was not stable.

I remembered how torn I was when I left my other school. I had only been at West one year, and already I knew I would feel torn about leaving. I remembered how the staff had counted on me and had felt grateful that I had come. They had worked hard and had done most of what I asked of them.

I remembered what a staff member had told me about her son and his friends. Last August, he had asked to meet the new principal. He came to school and chatted with me for over a half hour. That night he and his

friends approached his mother, a colleague at West, and said: "Why doesn't anybody like us?" When his mother reported this to me, I asked her "who didn't like them?". She explained that they were talking about principals. All the principals that had been at this school since her son and his friends were students there had left after one year.

I remembered Eric's comment about principals being ghosts, which I had interpreted as connected with their consistent disappearance after one year. I reflected on how my leaving the students at West would affect them. Though the principal does not have a daily personal relationship with students, there is a symbolic one. The lack of staff commitment and out-of-control behavior of students that I had contended with all year indicated a profound malaise at this school, starting at the top. If no one wanted to be in charge of this school, how did that affect the students? the staff? If people came to this school only to wait until they could get something better, then how could the students and dedicated staff in this school ever have equity, quality, or even hope?

My husband was excited about the invitation to apply to the other school. He had never heard of my present school. He knew about and respected the other one. He continually expressed concern over how my job was affecting me. Admirably, he seldom complained about himself, probably because he did not want to add to the pressure. Several times a week he would say: "You poor thing" in response to my recounting the

events of the day or his recognizing how much work I brought home. During this time I was also attending doctoral level courses at the University. So there really was no time for leisure at all. He had uncomplainingly adjusted to fast food meals every night, even weekends. I arrived at school at 7 am each morning and arrived home after 7 pm nightly, consistently averaging twelve hour days. Sometimes I stayed at work until 10 pm. Several times I stayed until midnight on Fridays. The new offer suggested less pressure to my husband and, therefore, more time for him. However, he could sense the way my mind was turning over ideas. He never tried to influence me. He pointed out that my job was taking an awful lot out of me, but he understood that I had to "live with myself."

Toward mid-week I heard rumblings that the staff at West was griping about the retreat. I heard it mentioned that some might take a sick day. We had decided to have it off campus at a retreat house, and some were complaining about the half hour drive. I was furious! Sarah and I had worked hard to make the retreat a quality experience. The night before the retreat I dreamed that the staff did not show up and that I applied to the other school. A quick way to resolve my dilemma!

The next morning I drove anxiously to the retreat site, wondering how many people would actually show up. I reflected on how lovely the half hour drive through rolling fields and quaint small towns really was. The sun was shining; the air was crisp. I felt invigorated. I drove down the

road to the retreat house. The property was lush with trees and flowers. A stone table and benches adorned one space in front of the large remodeled country house, a yard swing and picnic tables adorned another. The retreat house was actually two formerly adjacent houses that had been connected and designed into a spacious community room, kitchen-dining area, several sleeping areas, a hot tub and conversation areas. A statue of the Buddha in a Japanese garden greeted you at the door, offering a sense of peace and tranquility few spaces except monasteries give you. Sarah explained that the owners and remodelers of the house are two former nuns!

As the staff arrived, they, too, were liberated by the space. Choosing to have the retreat here was absolutely right. We informally ate rolls and coffee. Mark, our presenter, arrived. He, too, loved the space. Mark and I had decided that he should be the presenter, rather than myself, because I wanted to position myself as a member of the community and not the leader.

The retreat program that Mark and I planned began with a brainstorm session focused on the new building, which was in the planning stages for our school. I opened by telling them that our task today was to build the foundation for the future in the new building by developing a strong community among ourselves. I, then, introduced Mark, who led the morning sessions. We participated in a brainstorm session about each one of us being "the bricks" that, when connected together, make the foundation

stable and solid. I was a little worried about the unpoetic image of "being a brick" when we planned the session until the first speaker responded that "being a brick means being able to withstand a lot of abuse and never falling apart!" The whole room appreciated the fit of the metaphor, and we spent an hour playing with the image of bricks, foundations, and community. Then, we broke into small groups of six and spent an hour recording in round robin fashion the strengths of each person in the group on a small index card, after which each person's card was read by someone in the group, followed by informal discussion. This exercise provided an opportunity for staff to mix with each other and to have conversations that built confidence and relationship.

Next, we listened to Mark give a brief presentation on conflict resolution skills and some handouts. Participants discussed in groups the applications of these skills to their professional experience. Mark, then, bid us goodbye because he had another workshop to do.

Sarah took over to engage us in some team building exercises. She explained that we would divide into an indoor and an outdoor group. But, first (as she and I had planned) we would have one "touchy, feelly" exercise to get things rolling. She announced that only one person could really handle this, and she asked Irv to step forward. After laughter subsided, she blindfolded him, asked him to "trust" fall, and we passed him around the

voluntary "circle of support." For the next hour, we played team building games indoors and outdoors.

Grade level teams next met to exchange relevant information about students. Sixth grade teams met with seventh grade and seventh with eighth to share important information about student strengths, barriers, special conditions, and strategies that were successful with specific students. The related arts teachers and the special education teachers prepared lunch for the rest of us.

During lunch we engaged in informal conversations and walks around the grounds, which included tennis courts and a small pool. After lunch, I conducted our culminating ceremony. There was little opportunity to recognize each other during the busy weeks of our work, so, at the retreat, I intended to recognize everyone for something and to reinforce those who gave extra commitment with something. We all gathered in a large circle in the spacious community room. I read a poem to inspire us all about our work. I then told the staff that they were the difference in these students lives and that they were special because of the gift of their commitment. I first presented gifts to those teachers who had had perfect attendance for the year for "being there." Next, I presented awards to the team leaders and department chairs, who shouldered a great deal of responsibility. Finally, I presented certificates I had prepared for each staff member that commended their service to youth at West.

Affirming Others

Staff at this poor school had little in the way of amenities. They were given nothing. In fact, this year because of problems in the PTSA, there was no Teacher Appreciation celebration or anything else. I had given them all an ornament at Christmas, and that was all they had been given in recognition for their work. I had asked each team to prepare gag awards for their team members that I could present (in lieu of financial ones). I had, however, had some very classy West Middle School T-shirts made (for $5 apiece) that I presented to each staff member along with the certificate and the gag award. The T-shirts really were nice even though they were cheap. The following year, new staff asked for them when they saw other people wearing them, which made me feel very good. It gave me a sense of instilling school pride at a school that had little to be proud of heretofore.

Some of the gag awards were really funny and on target. Ailene, for example, who was never on time for her duty supervision or her classes, received a clock! I thought this was risky but, when I presented it to her, she laughed along with everyone else. A real sign of progress!

Right before my closing remarks, I looked at them and knew my decision about the other school had been made. They had all shown up. They had attempted what I asked them to do all year. I knew that I would not apply for the other position. I thanked them for calling me, for the

honor of serving them and the children, and I thanked them for the countless hours and "brick" work that they do.

The staff left each other for the summer, hugging and smiling. I was told that that this had not happened in a long time. A few core people helped to clean up and carry things to the car. They suggested we go to see the pool, which I had not seen. It was a beautiful pool, tastefully contoured and...WHOOSH! I'm in it! Why did I not suspect?

Our retreat closed with my Baptism, of sorts. The staff was a little apprehensive when I surfaced until I started laughing. We all agreed that it was a very good year!

1. Related arts classes are classes such as computer, art, physical education, and music. In a middle school, students are placed on a grade level team and attend classes with the same group of teachers and children throughout the day. The only time students leave the team is to go to related arts.

2. Youth Services Centers are social service agencies placed in schools and funded by the state of Kentucky. Schools with a population of 20% or more low socio-economic students are eligible to apply for funding of a Center through a grant application process. The Youth Services Centers were initiated as part of the 1990 Kentucky Educational Reform Act.

# CHAPTER V

# ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

*"The first roles of principals...are ministerial ones."*

*(Sergiovanni, T, 1996)*

## Analysis

This study examines three research questions. The first question is:

1. How is a principal like a minister?
   a. What ministerial tasks and responsibilities are evident in my work as a principal?
   b. How are the roles of a principal and a minister similar and how are they different?
   c. Are the pastoral and prophetic roles of a minister evident in the data of my practice?

I examined the data of my practice to identify the ministerial tasks and responsibilities that I undertook in my role as principal. My discussion of these tasks is organized by the nature of the tasks, categorized as either pastoral, providing support to individual students, parents and teachers, or prophetic, engaging others in the overall mission of the school community. Two additional functions of ministry emerged in the data of my practice: the pedagogic and the priestly functions of ministry. The pedagogic function expresses ministry through teaching and modeling; the

priestly function ministers through the use of symbols, ceremonies, and ritual. Data relevant to these themes are organized by category as well.

One aspect of my research question was to identify the similarities and differences between the role of the principal and the minister as evidenced in my practice. The similarities between the role of a principal and the role of a minister are discussed and illustrated in the numerous ministerial tasks that I undertook as principal. The differences between the role of a principal and a minister will be discussed separately after I identify the ministerial tasks I undertook as principal, categorized as either pastoral, prophetic, pedagogic, or priestly, or fitting none of these categories.

Pastoral Role

Enabling others. Enabling and empowering others is a key ministerial task, according to Carroll (1991) and Schner (1993). Whether empowerment means assisting others in management tasks, such as assisting the plant operator and helpers in transporting furniture across town, enabling a student to achieve self confidence, as in the case of Eric, or guiding teachers to solve their problems, as in the cases of Karen and Noel, I enabled others to actualize personal and professional goals. I empowered the counselors by placing them in charge and by obtaining training they needed from a retired counselor. I was able to empower Karen, the teacher who was going to transfer because she felt she was not meeting my standards, by focusing her on real problems and real solutions. I felt that,

like a minister, I frequently tried to finds ways to help others realize their potential and sometimes I think I succeeded.

Developing trust. The pastoral role of the minister has often been described as "cure for the soul" (McNeill, 1951). Building trust and listening to others is fundamental to establishing these relationships. Laura, Sandy and Myra, key teacher leaders who had expressed gratitude that I had chosen to come to West, provided a invitation to build trust that I nurtured and cultivated. Whenever I was confronted with decisions regarding the schedule, for example, I invited their feedback and support for both the direction to take and the manner in which to implement it. I was able to gradually develop trust with Ailene by using a variety of pastoral skills. I invested in her team's activities. Thus, when I asked for her help in addressing the need to provide adequate coverage in the gym rather than confront her for her negligence in not being on time, she traded morning duty for afternoon duty in a cooperative manner and was responsible in fulfilling it.

My ability to display my trust in others was a key ministerial challenge. Even though it was difficult, I trusted the counselors to complete the schedule, and struggled to accept Trudy's style and approach which was very different from mine.

I developed trust with the teacher who initially disagreed with me about passing a failing student on to high school, so that she eventually

worked with me to devise a strategy to allow that student an opportunity to pass. By listening to Eric, I often diffused his anger and he came to trust me. I also agreed not to call his mother because I sensed the anxiety that he felt towards her. I transformed Dean's dilemma from despair regarding her inability to pursue the school reform initiative she had undertaken to willingness to become reflective. I listened to her, shared my experience, and offered advice.

Lastly, the ministerial role of the confessor is one way in which others expressed their trust in me. For example, Noel admitted that she needed me to decrease her level of responsibility because her stress level was negatively impacting her at home and at work.

Affirming others. Affirming others is a key task of ministry (Clebach and Jaekle, 1967; Schuller, Strommen, and Brekke, 1980). Such affirmation is most meaningful in the face of mistakes, as in the case of the counselors and the schedule, when I tried to suppress my feelings of panic, disappointment and frustration. Similarly, I suppressed my annoyance at being paged to deal with snowballs when I was in the middle of working on the budget, only to realize later that the staff was right to interrupt me. When I negotiated the schedule with the related arts teachers, I suppressed my frustration at their reluctance to try innovative ideas. Affirming others in the face of crises, disappointment, and mistakes was a key ministerial task I consciously undertook.

Affirming students in various ways was also evidenced in my practice. Tomika consistently reached out for attention, and her notes to me are evidence that she was affirmed by my interest in and awareness of her problems. I believe Dante felt affirmed by getting his needs met, whether it was the repair of his coat or bus tickets to the Sports Club.

Sharing self. On the other hand, while suppressing one's negative feelings is a key ministerial task, establishing authenticity is equally important (Carroll, 1991; Noddings, 1984; Patton, 1993). I revealed myself initially by sharing my portfolio with the interview committee because I wanted them to know the person that I am and what I stand for. I felt that my power as a person was more important to establish than my power as a leader or expert. That is why I wanted the teacher leaders initially not to see me as "the administrator" and, at the retreat, I wanted to be seen as a team member and not "the leader."

The humanness of my being embarrassed by the contents of my car on the "A Team" escapade to claim the desk helped create a bond that we shared as members of a team. My "humanness" in not stopping for a school bus seemed to have resulted in an invitation by students who had witnessed my transgression to attend the next Academic Team competition. I viewed my being treated to a mock strip dance on my birthday and being thrown into the pool at the retreat as barometers of the level of trust and rapport that was developing through authentic relationships.

Healing others. Responding to the pain and hurt in others in the role of healer is another important ministerial task (McNeill, 1951; Nouwen, 1972; Coll, 1991). I immediately recognized the hurt in Eric when he begged me not to call his mother. I spoke sensitively and softly to Tommy's parents when I informed them that he was being arrested. Upon initially arriving at West, though I was concentrating on my own need to heal, I recognized that the teachers at West had a greater sense of loss than I had because of the continual abandonment that they seemed to feel. Interestingly, my concentrating on the need to heal them was the "cure" I needed for my own "soul." The gratitude expressed by Laura, the chair of the Participatory Management Committee, provided me the opportunity to begin to be healed by this community as well as for me to begin to heal them. That is why the prediction of the Deputy Superintendent that there was significant work to do at West increasingly rang true for me. The work at West itself became a way of healing me.

For example, as the trauma and pain of many of the students became apparent on a daily basis, I concentrated increasingly on the need for healing at West. I recognized that a key component of my role was to minister to the helplessness and despair that teachers and students felt. So, after Tommy was arrested for possession of the gun, I called the teacher who had worked with him most closely to tell her this bad news and process it with her. I expressed gratitude for all that the team of teachers had

given him as a way of comforting them. I knew the teachers would feel they had failed him, so I tried to bolster their spirits and get them to focus on what they did accomplish for him. I also attempted to get services for Tommy at the Alternative School because I recognized that he was a victim who needed healing more than any of us.

On many days, I recognized that the stress of the urban school environment at West put those teachers on overload who may have problems elsewhere in their lives. Mae, the teacher that kept bursting into tears with no explanation, was one of those teachers. I sought her out to let her know I was concerned about her. When I reached out to touch her and she began to cry, I reflected that principals, like ministers, need to respect the confidentiality of employee problems and try to assist them in coping with serious personal crises.

Prophetic Role

A variety of my tasks as principal can be categorized as prophetic, because of their emphasis on the larger mission of service to students. In my prophetic role, I focused on issues of ethicality, equity, social justice, and democratic process for students and staff.

Managing conflict. Increased emphasis on collaboration and shared decision making provided opportunities for channeling organizational conflict as a key prophetic task. The creation of the schedule became both a vehicle for community and consensus building around common values and

vision as well as the spark that ignited debate and controversy. Both scenarios are evident in my year and a half at West.

My task as principal, similar to a minister's role, became how to channel and focus the leaders and factions within the school to cohere for the sake of the larger prophetic mission of service to students. Sometimes I served as moral arbiter in managing conflict between competing priorities and individuals. To get the staff to resolve their differences on scheduling the permanent substitute, for example, I challenged them to either be fair and equitable with one another or not have the substitute at all.

In addition, when resolving the schedule issue related to the multi-grade team, I established that the process for decision making should be reopened because there was new information available. In establishing a democratic approach to conflict resolution, I invited opposing factions to the decision making meeting to insure that all sides were represented. I also emphasized areas of agreement such as pointing out to the related arts team that the multi-grade team students were almost all the same age, thereby allaying some of their concerns about the need to create two lesson plans for different levels of student.

Another example of managing conflict is illustrated in my ability to overcome the longstanding conflict between the middle and high school. By cultivating my relationship with the principal next door, I successfully negotiated the renovation of the eighth grade office at the Annex.

Establishing vision. A key task of both ministers and principals is establishing vision (Bennis and Nanus, 1985; Sergiovanni, 1996). I knew that the assistant principal would be a key asset in accomplishing my vision, so I made it a priority to hire her.

Part of my vision for this school was to increase student success. I attempted to impact attitudes toward retention of students by circulating Irv's (the eighth grade counselor) graduate school paper and national research on the ineffectiveness of retention. My goal was to focus the teachers on the mission of serving the best interests of students. Consistent with this goal, I collaborated with the coordinator of our summer program to change its focus to enrichment activities that students enjoyed and attended. The summer school teachers also enjoyed the program and became advocates for lowering the retention rate because these students who had failed throughout the year achieved well in the summer program. To reinforce this goal of lowering our failure rate, whenever the eighth grade teachers noted how the school climate had improved the following year, I quickly connected this improvement to the promotion to high school of older students who didn't belong in middle school.

Finally, to support this vision, I aided the multi-grade team in their effort to serve students because they were willing to accelerate students from one grade level to the next based on ability and effort. I also initiated the Transition program to provide an opportunity for students who had

failed the previous year to obtain the next grade level in half as much time. On our Opening Day of school, I gave a "fire in the belly" sermon in which I reminded teachers of their call to promote student success.

Eliciting faith. Eliciting faith is a key ministerial task (Carroll, 1991; Coll, 1991; Pohly, 1993) that I believe is increasingly important for me as principal. In the face of the neglect and violence in contemporary urban schools like West, it is easy to give up hope for any solutions to the overwhelming problems presented by the desperate needs of children. However, awakening a teacher's faith in the importance and realization of this call is a key ministerial task that principals must undertake (Anderson, 1994; Shawchuch and Heuser, 1993). The evening that I encouraged the new teacher to watch "Stand and Deliver" and admonished her to see beyond the present condition of the students and to not let them scare her away, I was attempting to engage her on a faith dimension. Though I was not successful, I attempted to engage Charles on a faith dimension by appealing to his own experience as a minister in meeting the challenging need of the students at West.

One aspect of eliciting teacher faith that I undertook was to create hope through concrete, physical improvements. I concentrated on the physical space--the paint, the offices and the window treatment, as a symbolic way of expressing "a new day" had arrived for this school community. Many teachers expressed feelings of abandonment at "having

been brought to this place" and needed someone to believe in and to work alongside.

Eliciting faith was reciprocated early on when the interview committee chose the candidates I wanted for the assistant principal and plant operator positions. Each time Central Office responded to fulfill one of my many maintenance requests, I felt affirmed and heard.

My symbolic presence was especially felt, not just by the teachers, but also the students. The fact that I stayed and didn't leave the second year was the more substantive action I took to elicit teacher and student faith.

Admonishing others. A principal's "work" often includes admonishing others to follow the mission (Coll, 1991; Stagg, 1976). I eventually confronted Ailene for being tardy and required her to be on time. I confronted Eric's fighting behavior for which he was suspended. In my first week as principal, I engaged the superintendent about the poor conditions of the West school and asked him to commit to do something to improve it or to close it. In a meeting with one team of teachers, I admonished them for not acting responsibly in supervising their hallways and, thus, failing to provide a safe environment for students.

Establishing justice. Establishing justice was a key prophetic task in my role as principal (Adams, 1986; Carroll, 1991). When Irv showed me the conditions of the office operations in the Annex, my eyes misted over

because of a sense of outrage that I felt at seeing these horrible conditions. I went to the superintendent to ask justice for this community.

In the cases of Eric and Tommy, both special needs children, I was confronted with the need to respond to actions they had taken which endangered the safety of others. In Eric's case, I decreased the normal suspension procedures and only suspended him one day for fighting with another student. In Tommy's case, however, because of the serious nature of having a loaded gun and drugs at school, I chose to send him to the alternative school but attempted to get social services provided for him. In another case, I arranged Dean's supervisory assignments to make it equivalent to other teacher aides. In solving the conflict between Ailene and Charles, I recognized that providing justice and fairness to Ailene was a key issue.

Building community. Building community was a main theme in my role as principal at West, and it is a key function of ministry (Poling and Miller, 1985; Carroll, 1991). I arranged to have conflict resolution skills taught to staff at the retreat because I knew the development of these skills was fundamental to building community. I also conducted a ceremony in which I blessed positive behavior such as perfect attendance and gave T-shirts and certificates to everyone as a token of appreciation. I structured time during the retreat for each grade level of staff to address the next

grade level about the needs and interests of the students to provide a community of care for the students.

Building an administrative team was a key focus of mine. I was elated when I added the assistant principal and plant operator to the staff because of the potential they could contribute to our team. The assistant principal dubbed us all the "A Team" during our furniture escapade to capture the sense of fun and teamwork we were building. Our teamwork was particularly manifested when we managed to move all the furniture in the Annex office and set up a temporary office in one afternoon so work could begin on the new office. It was also evident when I felt "redeemed" by Irv, who resolved our schedule dilemma with a plan that worked.

My own values of community were evident in the loss I felt in leaving East. I felt uprooted and had a strong sense of loyalty to the commitments, people, and mission I had been serving. A need for community is also evident in the loneliness that at times I experience in my role as principal, both because of my lack of a close relationship with the students and because of my role as leader of the staff. Building community was also evident in my successful collaboration with the high school, which resulted in improved opportunities for both schools.

Pedagogic

Teaching lessons. Teaching is a key task of ministry (Carroll, 1991; Hamilton, 1992) and is important in my role as principal. I consistently

worked with Eric to learn the interpersonal skills of ignoring others who were taunting him and of resolving conflict with them. I taught conflict management to Eric by telling him to ignore others and by helping him resolve problems with his enemies. I also arranged for the teachers to develop these skills at the retreat. I arranged a lesson by the investigators for some teachers on the proper application of the discipline code. I arranged for a retired counselor to train my counselors in scheduling. I gave a mini-lesson to Ronald on strategies to impact our potential dropouts. I arranged for all staff to review and teach the laws about guns in school to all students after the incident with Tommy.

Modeling best practice. Modeling is a chief task of ministers (R. Beal, personal communication, Feb. 9, 1996) and was important in my leadership practice as well. I demonstrated a caring ethic for Eric even when others had become tired of his behavior. When the "A team" inappropriately took furniture without permission, I demonstrated appropriate procedure. When handling the gun incident, I consciously modeled a caring ethic toward Tommy in questioning him. I consciously used the kind of professional communication with Ailene that I wanted her to use with others and never engaged with her on a reactive level.

Priestly

Giving blessings. Reinforcing positive behavior that supports the mission of the school is a principal's task that is similar to the blessings

ministers provide (Stagg, 1976; Carroll, 1991). After the staff compromised with each other to develop a schedule for the permanent substitute, I blessed them in a mock papal blessing to signify my approval for their successful management of conflict.

Praising individuals when they fulfill the mission of the school is a form of blessing. At the retreat, I presented perfect attendance and leadership awards to staff to recognize outstanding performance. I praised the summer school coordinator for her success in creating a topnotch after school program. I repeatedly praised and thanked staff in the weekly newsletter for professional accomplishments and service. I personally told Anne that I admired her for struggling with the best way to respond to the student assault on herself and her glasses.

Blessings, like healing, can be reciprocal. I felt blessed after the interviewing committee selected my first choice of candidates for assistant principal and plant operator because it was important that I have a team of people with whom I could work well.

Establishing ritual. Establishing ritual is a key task of ministry (Carroll, 1991; Stagg, 1976). By orchestrating the order of service, the protocol of church meetings, the events that are solemnized year in and year out, the minister determines the rhythms and community memory of the life of the church. In the same way, I as principal order the day with the reading of the morning announcements, the saying of the Pledge of

Allegiance and, in my case at West, the school mission statement, which I view as the covenant of the school, and Wildcat Time, which organizes the day.

A task of the principal is to make sure that the rituals, the repeated behaviors and daily routines of the school, focus on the mission of the school. I helped to eliminate ringing bells for class changes to humanize the climate of the school for the students. I also provided my M and M man as incentives to students for good behavior, a pastoral emphasis. I established the Wildcat Weekly staff newsletter as a ritual act and delivered a weekly sermon in the form of my Reflections column. As principal, I also set expectations for teachers by establishing the rituals of being on time for class and morning duty.

Presiding and celebrating. One of the priestly roles of principals is to preside at ceremonies, such as the Closing Day Retreat and to celebrate the achievements and successes of individuals and the community (Carroll, 1991; Stagg, 1976). I presided at the Track Team banquet and gave out the trophies. Often my role as principal took on the priestly duties of providing occasions for ceremony, celebrating deeds, and anointing sacred moments. I was the center of a few ceremonies, the birthday party highlighted by a mock strip dance and the farewell party at East highlighted by the limousine ride. Such ceremonies are essential in establishing community.

Another priestly role I undertook was initiating the "slider communion" for the A Team as a way of celebrating our deeds that day. When we redesigned our schedule for the second time, we all experienced a moment of "A Team" exhilaration in accomplishing our goal.

One aspect of celebrating a community's values is through the use of symbols. I provided a symbolic frame for the community by presenting the metaphor of ourselves as the "bricks," the foundation of the "new day" we were building. Symbolic acts, objects, and events serve to emphasize the mission of the school. I prioritized the creation of an improved physical environment to signify "a new day", to signify that this community was important and was deserving of quality. Happily, I managed to have the cafeteria, both offices, the library, and the attendance clerk's office renovated. Such improvements conveyed not only to staff and students but particularly to parents that we wanted to establish a positive, caring environment.

Summary of the Ministerial Functions and Skill Dimensions

In summary, at West the pastoral function of ministry was expressed through five ministerial tasks--enabling others, developing trust, affirming others, sharing self, and healing others--as the examples in my practice illustrate. The prophetic function was exhibited through six ministerial tasks: managing conflict, establishing vision, eliciting faith, admonishing others, establishing justice, and building community. Two additional

functions of ministry, the pedagogic and the priestly roles, emerged as I reflected and tried to capture in vignettes evidence of my practice. The pedagogic function comprised two ministerial tasks: teaching others and modeling best practices. The priestly function was expressed in three ministerial tasks: giving blessings, establishing ritual, and presiding and celebrating.

Thus, the roles of a principal and a minister are similarly enacted through four functions: the pastoral, prophetic, pedagogic, and priestly. Furthermore, the literature and the data indicate that principals and ministers employ the sixteen specific tasks illustrated above to fulfill their roles.

Areas that Do Not Correspond to "Principal as Minister"

One aspect of the principalship that I did not include in my data was the management function. I excluded this function because I wanted to examine my leadership practice only. The administrative aspects of managing the principalship do not correspond well to categories in the "principal as minister" frame. However, management tasks such as hiring, firing, and budgeting do have consequences that may be pastoral, prophetic, pedagogic, or priestly.

Principals and ministers are similarly challenged by endless but essential management tasks that diminish the time and energy available for leadership. Practices such as organizing office routines and daily

management operations are necessary but instrumental means of accomplishing leadership goals. In the data of my practice, I made reference to "administrivia" competing for my focus on several occasions. Both principals and ministers share the dilemma of not allowing these instrumental challenges to become ends in themselves rather than the means to accomplish larger professional ends (R. Beal, personal communication, Jan. 5, 1996).

Differences Between Principals and Ministers

One difference between ministers and principals is the difference in relationship created by the role of supervisor that is embedded in the principal's role. Despite efforts toward building community and collegial support in which I engaged, as principal I was still the "boss." I consciously expressed authenticity and humanness in an effort to counteract the distancing effect that the supervisory role can create. Unlike a minister, the principal has supervisory responsibility for personnel as employees and students as members of the community, creating potential conflict with both the pastoral and prophetic roles. Though the minister supervises church employees, the minister has no supervisory responsibilities for congregants. In addition, not only is the principal responsible for evaluating the staff, but the principal is evaluated by the quality of the staff's work, as illustrated in the pressure I felt getting the schedule ready for opening day.

Another significant difference between principals and ministers is illustrated in the case of the tragedy of Tommy. In the face of such tragedy, ministers are invited to provide the meaning interpretation (Carroll, 1991) to the problems of evil and hopelessness, usually drawing from a specific religious tradition. However, as principal, though I could sense the grief and pain of the teachers, I felt role conflict in attempting to minister directly to the sense of loss and tragedy such events evoke. In a sense, we needed to "pray" for Tommy. Ministers could do that because their role participates directly in concerns of ultimacy and meaning. As principal, I felt awkward and inadequate in attempting to minister to their pain.

The nature of my "call" to be a principal is both similar and different from the call to ministry. The call to ministry is ultimately grounded in a church community. Despite my own needs for community, my experience of being uprooted from one school to another with the expectation that I feel no responsibility for the school that I left mitigated against forming attachments or community. Subsequently, the invitation to move to another school produced personal angst, causing me to weigh my own inner values of mission and purpose against an external environment that did not reinforce such values.

According to Anderson (1994), there are several levels of the ministerial call. The call to ministry is sometimes a life changing event in the life of an individual. Ministers report the experience of an inner

awakening that either focused or changed the direction of their lives. After the initial call, ministers experience a call in the development of their skills. Finally, they experience a call from a congregation to serve.

My "call" as principal was different initially. I experienced the call to the principalship as a promotion and a challenge. Moreover, I viewed the nature of my call as secular rather than "divine."

However, I do see similarities in my call to the principalship. I was called by the school in the form of a local committee much like ministers are called by the congregation. Because I am serving at a school with a high percentage of disadvantaged children, an emergent theme of moral leadership is beginning to stir in me. The opportunity to leave West and go to an easier position actually served to deepen my commitment and my mission at West. Similar to ministry, there is evidence that the call has had a transformative effect on me (R. Beal, personal communication, Jan. 5, 1996). This transforming effect serves to deepen my practice to a more substantive, prophetic focus.

## Findings

The second research question of this study is:

2. How is my leadership practice affected by my reflection on the "principal as minister" metaphor?
    a. How does reflection enhance or alter my pastoral role? my prophetic role?

b. What sources of data seem to be most influential in affecting my practice?

c. When does the metaphor not work and why?

A key focus of my research study is the impact of reflection on my practice. Specifically, how did my reflection on the principal as minister metaphor affect my practice? There are five findings in my study.

Reflection Provided Consistent Focus

The first finding is that reflection provided consistent focus on the prophetic and pastoral themes. The pastoral and prophetic themes that emerged from my "Reflections" column in The Wildcat Weekly are evidence of the impact that the weekly reflective time spent in writing the column provided. Moreover, the recurrence of the themes related to the principal as minister metaphor on a weekly basis indicate their significance in guiding me. The themes that were most pervasive as manifested in The Wildcat Weekly were: affirming others, sharing self, healing others, giving blessings, celebrating, establishing vision, eliciting faith, and building community. Furthermore, the emergence of these same themes in the data about my practice suggest a link between my reflections on the metaphor and my behavior.

Reflection Enhanced Awareness of My Role

A second finding is that reflection created an awareness of a difference in my role with students. Reflection resulted in my awareness

that I spend very little time focusing on students directly. Most of my journal entries are about staff interactions rather than student interactions. This reflection led me to the awareness that I use the principal as minister metaphor primarily as a vehicle for dealing with staff rather than students.

I discovered that I have less of a pastoral lens with students than I did as an assistant principal. As principal, I seldom use my principal as minister metaphor in situations involving students. In fact, when a student problem arose in data I collected for "A Day in the Life," I handled the discipline problem but did not spend pastoral time counseling with students. Instead, I dealt with the problems decisively and went on to the next concern.

Consequently, whenever I reflected on this void of direct student service in my practice, I noticed that I was more attentive with the students the succeeding day, as in the case of Dante. Reflection seemed to provide a temporary antidote against the pervasive "administrivia" that constantly competes for my focus.

My reflections have led me to the awareness that the pastoral role, as it relates to students, is more applicable in the assistant principal's role than in the principal's role in my experience. As principal, I use the pastoral role to provide support and guidance to staff who are serving the students; they, in turn, are better positioned to provide pastoral support to students. I see my role as creating an environment that would provide this

kind of support for students rather than providing it directly. Therefore, I have shifted my focus to staff development, in an effort to empower staff to develop student success.

I wonder about this change. So often when a difficult discipline problem is "kicked up" to me, the counselors and assistant principals are almost worn out. They want action. My focus is more decisive and less problem-solving. I have to rely on my staff to develop the pastoral relationships that guide students to growth and development.

At the same time, reflection has made me more aware of a different kind of interaction with students. I have a symbolic role in their eyes because I represent the institution of the school. Commenting on their work displayed on bulletin boards, visiting classes and watching them perform is both affirming and enabling for them. I am coming to value this symbolic role increasingly, particularly since it is becoming the most significant connection I have with students.

The "Principal as Minister" Metaphor Has Four Functions

During the last year and a half of my practice, I applied the "principal as minister" metaphor using only the pastoral and prophetic dimension. Through the review of literature and conversations with the ministry expert on my committee, this study has expanded my awareness of two additional functions of ministry--the pedagogic, comprised of teaching

and modeling, and the priestly, consisting of celebrating communal ceremonies and symbols.

Upon examining the data of my practice, I recognized the emergence of these two additional functions both in my reflections in The Wildcat Weekly and in my conduct as principal. In summary, a key finding is that the "principal as minister" metaphor has at least four dimensions or functions: prophetic, pastoral, pedagogic, and priestly.

The "Principal as Minister" Metaphor is Dynamic and Interrelated

In many instances, the pastoral and prophetic roles were conjoined in the accomplishment of my work as principal. For example, one evening a new teacher who had been hit in the face by a stapler and then suffered the loss of her eyeglasses to student vandalism called me for advice. In this case, I initially responded in the pastoral role of listener and supporter. However, when I was asked for advice as to whether or not the teacher should press charges in court, I called upon my prophetic lens in response by focusing on the needs of the student. In this encounter, I modeled and taught this new teacher to always think about the larger mission of service to students when making decisions that affect them.

I shared with her my personal experiences of being hit by students. My response to each incident was based on my view of what was in the best interest of the student. For example, in one case, I viewed the student's action of hitting me in the face as adolescent testing that simply required

my modeling a non-violent response. While in another case, I pressed charges in court to insure that the student received anger counseling because I felt he was dangerous to himself and others. Teaching the new teacher how to think beyond the instinctive, reactive level of human response to a professional vision that focused on student needs was a vital lesson I wanted her to learn that evening. I felt that I had successfully used my prophetic role to connect this teacher with the larger mission of serving the best interests of children.

As I came to understand through my analysis of the data of my practice that the pedagogic and priestly functions were also evident, I recognized that they, too, are interrelated with the pastoral and prophetic. For example, giving blessings, resolving conflicts, and admonishing others may ultimately result in the "care of the soul," a pastoral act. The prophetic act of admonishing others to fulfill their role in the overall mission of the school at times can best be accomplished through a pedagogic method. For example, when mistakes were made on the schedule, I chose to teach the counselors how to develop their skills. When Trudy did not fill out federal forms properly in a special education case and Central Office became concerned about it, I did not admonish her or make her feel inept. Instead, I realized that her mistakes demonstrated a training need to which I responded.

The dynamic aspects of the "principal as minister" metaphor consisted of four interrelated aspects of one theme--ministry. Consequently, though one function may be primarily applicable in any given situation, the awareness of other possible functions provides an experimental frame from which to study one's practice. In the mode of framing-reframing-experimentation and talkback (Schon, 1983, 1987), the principal as minister metaphor equips the practitioner with a repertoire of choices in the midst of practice that focus action--teaching, preaching, counseling or celebrating--and that are accessible--these closely related functions can be interchanged easily in the same situation or from one situation to the next, e.g., preaching to the Team Leaders at a meeting and counseling the next minute to a staff member in my office.

The "Principal as Minister" Metaphor is Evoked in Situations that Pose Dilemmas or Competing Agendas

The "principal as minister" metaphor frequently provided an intervening perspective in the midst of a dilemma or a situation in which I had to choose between competing agendas. As in the case with the teacher hit in the face with a stapler who then suffered the loss of her glasses, the metaphor intervened to shift my focus from the pastoral to the prophetic frame. When Dean expressed concern about the loss of planning time in the resource lab, I was able to maintain my prophetic focus on the needs of students, yet modify my plan to include a pastoral response to Dean's needs.

I used the pastoral skills of affirming others and establishing trust with Ailene even though the main agenda was to eventually improve her service to others. When I met with a team to admonish them about lack of supervision in their hallways, a prophetic task, I relied upon my pastoral skills of sharing self and healing others in my discussion with them. In the data described in "A Day in the Life", I repeatedly changed my prophetic focus to a pastoral one because of the need for healing and pastoral care exhibited by both students and staff.

The "Principal as Minister" Metaphor Acts as Both Purpose and Method

The four-fold functions of ministry operate like a camera. Ministry provides the lens through which I view my practice. The focus of the lens in any given situation may be prophetic, pastoral, pedagogic, or priestly. As I have already discussed, these functions are dynamic and interrelated; they operate in combination with one another rather than separately.

Thus, each of the four functions can serve as the purpose or focus of my practice in a given situation. Though the other three functions are present in the background, only one function seems to be in the foreground at any one time and is selected as I perceive its fit with the needs of the situation at hand. So, my purpose in the meeting with the team of teachers and the investigators was prophetic even though I used pedagogy to teach them about the discipline code. At the retreat, I had a priestly purpose in conducting the awards ceremony even though my method was pastoral.

Therefore, each of the four functions may also serve as a method. I understand purpose and method to be the "why" and "how" of ministry practice. For example, in any given situation the purpose or explanation as to why I am practicing in a certain way may be prophetic, pastoral, priestly, or pedagogic and the method or how I am conducting my practice may be any combination as well. My practice itself in any given situation is the "what" and is grounded in the prophetic mission of providing equitable opportunities and democratic process in the public school setting.

For example, in the meeting concerning the schedule of the permanent substitute, my purpose was prophetic and my method was pastoral. However, I used pedagogy to review conflict management skills they had learned at the retreat. When they resolved the issue successfully, I gave them a priestly blessing to reinforce their positive group resolution.

In summary, the "principal as minister" metaphor has compelling implications for my practice. Using the ministry theme, the metaphor has the power of the generative metaphor (Bowers and Flinders, 1990). The talkback from given situations provides a springboard from which to reframe and refocus one's lens, using different angles that result in varied combinations of purposes and methods and potentially infinite opportunities of outcomes and of the study of one's practice. Using the varied aspects of the metaphor in combination allows me to avoid "compassionless prophetic

activism or ... sentimental care-taking that lacks prophetic vision and commitment" (Shelp and Sunderland, 1985, p. 24-5).

Data Sources that Most Influenced My Practice

Data which presented competing agendas posed dilemmas that invited reflection in the midst of action. In these cases, the "principal as minister" metaphor became an intervening perspective that grounded my practice in a solid framework for decision-making. I became very conscious of the application of the metaphor in these circumstances and did, in fact, modify my leadership approach.

For example, I decided to decrease a classified staff member's planning time because an increase in student discipline problems indicated the need for more adult supervision. By increasing this staff member's time to directly serve students, I focused on our prophetic mission to students. However, I shifted my focus in listening to her need to prepare materials in the resource lab. Consequently, the competing dilemmas between prophetic and pastoral resulted in a new win-win solution in which students were sent to work with her to prepare materials. They received the tutorial instruction and attention they needed; she obtained the assistance she needed. This unity of focus between pastoral and prophetic (Shelp and Sunderland, 1985) created a wider field of vision and a more effective solution.

Similarly, I listened in a pastoral way to the distress of a teacher who was needing support and advice because she had been hit in the face with a stapler and suffered the loss of her glasses due to vandalism. However, I consciously changed my pastoral approach to a prophetic one in the midst of our interaction to teach her how to have a prophetic rather than a reactive response to the incident.

In another situation, I set out on a prophetic mission to transform the library into a purposeful program. Because I sensed that the librarian was hesitant, I shifted my focus to a pastoral approach in my attempts to gain his support.

In summary, a key finding is that the "principal as minister" metaphor was useful particularly in situations with competing agendas that caused me to shift from one focus to the other.

Another source of data that was most influential in affecting my practice was the "Reflections". Writing this column gave me the opportunity to set priorities for the staff, reinforce our mission, and provide continual support and challenge as well. This column gave me an opportunity to continually emphasize the pastoral and prophetic themes that were at the center of my leadership practice, though still tacitly understood. I came to view Reflections as my sermon and viewed it as one of my key ministerial functions. In writing it, I experienced an integration

of my own beliefs and attitudes in a constructivist way (Carroll, 1993; Schon, 1983, 1987).

This finding has lead me to the awareness that I stressed the importance of reflection for staff as well as for myself. The reflection theme continually emerges in the Wildcat even though I was not conscious of it at the time I created the column. Perhaps because writing the column created meaningful reflection time for me, I kept suggesting that some reflective practice be undertaken by the staff. One example occurs in the Sept. 12 issue of the Wildcat:

> Team time is your built-in reflection time during the day. It's a time away from kids, record books, and papers. It's a time to think about the meaning of your work...This reflective time is essential in our continuous improvement of the quality of life at West. (Sept. 12, 1994)

In summary, the data that evoked the metaphor consistently were situations with competing agendas and the writing of the Wildcat Weekly.

Times When the Metaphor Did Not Fit

In reflecting on my practice, I find a significant fit for the "principal as minister" metaphor. As I have previously mentioned, this study did not include the management functions of my practice, areas which would have least applicability for the metaphor.

Although there are significant parallels between the roles of a principal and a minister, there is one way in which the metaphor does not work that I felt is significant. I have already mentioned my awareness that

I seldom used the metaphor with students. That awareness led me to consciously attempt to counteract this void in my practice. However, I began to notice that developing relationships with students usually made me feel inadequate in giving them the attention they needed. For example, after my pep talk with Tomika I asked Tomika to stop in and see me everyday and keep me posted on how she was doing. That began a series of notes left on my desk, my chair, and sometimes posted to my door. Daily, I would hear from Tomika--but I was never in for her to find. Sometimes I would see her in the hall, and she would mention her life that she described in the notes. At those times, I could be attentive, but I felt bad at how little I gave her and at how needy she was.

My role mitigated against any consistent contact with students and I began not to cultivate it lest I disappoint them. My experience of my role as principal is that constant crises and interruptions that require management skills, such as planning, problem solving, and negotiating, require concentration on holistic schoolwide improvement and less on the needs of an individual child.

## Conclusions

The third question that was posed in this study is:

3. What are the implications of the principal as minister metaphor?
    a. How might such reflection impact my future practice?

b. How might such reflection on ministerial themes in the principalship contribute to leadership theory for contemporary urban schools?

c. How might such reflection contribute to staff development?

I will answer this question by first discussing conclusions and implications for further study regarding my own practice as a result of this study. Second, I will discuss conclusions and implications for leadership theory and staff development as a result of this study.

Implication For My Practice

As a result of this study, the implications for my future practice are:

My role with students. Perhaps the reason I seldom feel ministerial around students is because the role of principal is removed from direct services to students. But should this be the case? This study is making me rethink my role or, at least, my approach with students.

How do they perceive me? What would they like a principal to be like? A minister, perhaps? I have definitely not been approaching students with the same sense of team and collaboration as I have approached the staff.

One of the things most critical in schools today, according to Eisner (1991) is the "absence of pastoral care for students" (p.16). Eisner defines pastoral care as

> ...helping children realize that they are part of a caring community ...In short, the school has always has a caring role to play, but this role is considerably more critical today. Developing an ethic of caring and creating a community that cares is, as far as I know, on no one's list of educational priorities--but it ought to be (p. 16).

As Eisner points out creating a caring climate for students in schools is critical. This study has made me aware that my role with students has changed. Because I am not personally able to provide the pastoral support they need, it is incumbent on me to hire and train staff who will provide it. This study has made me more aware that my role with students is prophetic and priestly. This awareness will provide new opportunities to use my prophetic role to connect students to the larger community through perhaps service projects and an emphasis on socially relevant curriculum. I can use my priestly role to better reinforce the students' sense of achievement and belonging through ceremony and use of school and academic symbols.

Future application of the metaphor. As I have already pointed out, I predict that the use of my prophetic and priestly lens will be more effective with students. However, as a result of this study, I plan to emphasize these same roles with teachers.

For two reasons, I believe it is important to deemphasize my pastoral approach with staff. First of all, the healing process and trust building that I have been cultivating should have created a foundation of support on which staff know they can rely. To serve students better, it is time to ask

staff to change their behavior to better serve the prophetic mission of the school. One way to provide support to staff in this mission is through the priestly role. Use of the priestly role to initiate more celebrations, ceremonies, rites and meaning making through the use of symbols such as our logo and school name on T-shirts and memorabilia will help connect staff to our larger mission as well.

Another function that I intend to use more intentionally is pedagogy. Though I have used it frequently, this study has made me aware of the importance of teaching and modeling in my role. Because the pastoral care of students is primarily in the hands of teachers, I can teach teachers the pastoral skills they need. Another area of growth that teachers need for their professional development is in the area of leadership. I intend to explore ways I can use my skills in pedagogy to develop teacher leadership.

Thus, as a result of this study, I will begin to emphasize the prophetic skill dimensions of eliciting faith, admonishing others, establishing vision and justice, and building community. I will emphasize the priestly role of celebrating and giving blessings and the teaching and modeling skills of pedagogy. Although I will continue to be pastoral in enabling and affirming others, I will focus less on healing and building trust unless there is evidence that these dimensions are regressing.

A second reason to shift my focus to a new lens is for the purpose of my own professional development. One reason I have used the pastoral

function primarily is in response to the overwhelming need for healing that I recognized at West. However, another reason for its use is my own propensity to use pastoral skills, partly because sensitivity and caring fit my personal ethic and partly because through my former role as assistant principal I developed a facility in this area.

However, the "principal as minister" metaphor provides a continuum of leadership skill choices in the form of the four functions and sixteen skill dimensions identified in this study. Part of its usefulness for me is the opportunity to shift my focus and emphasis in new directions and through "talkback" I can continue to study my own practice through this new lens. Thus, I intend to begin to frame-reframe-experiment and "talkback" with the skill dimensions of the prophetic and priestly functions. The "principal as minister" metaphor provides an ongoing continuum of personal professional development for me in my practice.

Reflection in community. A third implication for further study in the form of experimentation is the creation of opportunities for my staff to develop skills in reflective practice. In conducting my study, I modeled the value of reflective practice to my staff. Key staff and teacher leaders participated in my study by discussing it with me and reading sections as readers as checks for validity and for permission to publish.

In The Wildcat Weekly I have already established my belief in the importance of my staff's need to become reflective. By sharing my

reflections with staff in The Wildcat Weekly, I established the importance of reflection on practice and of sharing this reflection. I have learned the importance of including a reflective column weekly in my newsletter as an ongoing way to provide focus for me and my staff.

However, sharing my own reflections through this study began a new level of communication with staff. I received positive feedback from them regarding the insights about themselves that I wrote about and the enlargement of their own point of view by sharing my view with them. Several teachers had shared portions of their professional journals with me throughout the year. By sharing mine with them, we are developing a more honest level of professional communication in which exploration and inquiry is embedded. What better way to tap into teachers' beliefs and attitudes as well as my own than by sharing our professional questions, disagreements and struggles through reflective practice? Perhaps a way to cope with the tragic lives of so many urban children and families is to share our reflections and our professional responses. Nouwen (1994) recommended a way to build community was through the "mutuality of pain". I plan to continue my reflective practice and to invite more staff to begin reflective practice. One way to institutionalize reflective writing might be to begin a journal group which meets periodically (Progoff, 1975).

In summary, I am changing my practice as a result of this study because of new awareness I have developed in my role with students.

Because this study has deepened and broadened my own understanding of the "principal as minister" metaphor, I now have new areas of practice to explore for future study in the prophetic, priestly, and pedagogic functions. Additionally, I intend to continue my own reflections and to share them with staff, possibly in a professional journal group.

This study has provided conclusions and implications for further study in leadership theory and staff development as well.

Implications For Leadership Theory

A key focus of my research has been the study of the use of the "principal as minister" metaphor in my practice. My findings have resulted in an expansion of the metaphor into two additional functions and a deepening of my understanding of its skill dimensions and their applications. My awareness that the four-fold functions are interrelated and act as both a purpose and a method provides a broad context of professional development opportunities as I attempt to apply the "principal as minister" metaphor in various combinations.

One next step for further work in this area is the development of a self study packet that addresses the "principal as minister" framework and invites its use by other colleagues through reflective practice. Their findings would be useful in shedding light on the broader application of the metaphor to other practitioners.

Additionally, the use of the LPI survey (Kouzes and Posner, 1989) in conjunction with the use of reflective study using the "principal as minister" metaphor might triangulate the reflective data with survey data to explore what correlation may exist. The LPI survey measures five leadership characteristics which may correlate with the "principal as minister" metaphor: encouraging the heart, enabling others to act, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, and modeling the way. Survey data from colleagues, such as the staff of my school, might provide useful data that can be correlated with the reflective data I have already gathered on the "principal as minister" metaphor. Such data could enhance the significance of the usefulness of this metaphor in one's practice, depending on the outcomes.

A key learning of this study, as I have mentioned earlier, is a deeper and broader understanding of the implications of the metaphor in my practice. The various combinations of function and purpose provide new models of leadership practice to study and explore. For example, how would a leader whose purpose was prophetic and whose method was pastoral have a different style than a leader whose purpose was prophetic but whose style was pedagogic? How would outcomes differ? Which approach would be more effective? Why?

For my practice, I can envision various combinations I wish to explore. How can I sharpen my skills in prophetic teaching and elicit staff's

faith by instructing them about the moral mission of schools? How can I be a better pastoral teacher and teach my staff the skills to affirm and support each other? I envision new ways to institute the priestly function in my practice. How might this priestly function be applied in a pastoral way? a prophetic way? a pedagogic way?

My reflections on the metaphor in this way actually generate new awareness and extends my practice in new endeavors. In this sense, the "principal as metaphor" serves as a generative metaphor for me. As Bowers and Flinders (1990) point out, this generative metaphor serves as a moral guidance system for me in my practice. It encodes assumptions about the reality of my practice and constitutes it as well. Such a metaphor has the potential for transforming my practice because it changes experience through an interplay with the stream of symbols that constitute the human mind (Langer, 1942).

Thus, the "principal as minister" metaphor through its moral guidance system helps me to operationalize moral leadership in my school. In the beginning of this study, I established the need for moral leadership in schools and for a new kind of leadership (Sergiovanni, 1996). Sergiovanni points out that the theoretical constructs we use in understanding social institutions help to shape them. In search of a new leadership theory for the schoolhouse, Sergiovanni identifies characteristics that are important for such a theory:

- it should be aesthetic
- its language and images should be beautiful
- it should be consistent with the school's human purposes and conditions
- it should emphasize moral connections
- it should evoke sacred images
- it should compel people to respond for internal rather than external reasons
- it should respond to the nature of human rationality
- it should acknowledge self-interest and the ability to rise above it
- it should reflect constructivist teaching and learning principles
- it should transform the school into a center of inquiry
- it should encourage principals, teachers, parents and students to be self-managing, to accept responsibility, and to feel a sense of obligation and commitment to do the right thing (1996, p.xv).

The "principal as minister" metaphor meets many of these criteria for me in my practice. One implication of this metaphor for leadership theory is an expansion of the metaphor of ministry to teachers as well as principals. Teachers also serve in the functions of prophetic, pastoral, priestly, and pedagogic roles. The principal can be viewed as the senior minister of a multi-staffed congregation in which, the principal as senior minister oversees the teacher ministers who serve the students (R. Beal, personal communication, Mar. 23, 1996). The moral development of children would clearly be a role for school practitioners in the application of such a theory.

Implications For Staff Development

A key focus of my reflective study is the process itself. The study and use of reflection to improve practice may be one of the most significant

methods of professional development for practitioners (Schon, 1983, 1987). Professional journaling is a commonly used strategy for professional growth; yet, in other attempts I have seldom been successful in doing it.

However, compiling my reflections about the "principal as minister" has been meaningful. For the first time, I am using the reflective journal effectively, and I recognize changes in practice, attitude, awareness, and vision because of it.

In a previous staff development initiative conducted by the National Association of Secondary School Principals, I was asked to keep a weekly log on my leadership practice. Along with nineteen colleagues, I had studied and practiced six leadership components and the key behaviors of each: organizational ability, sensitivity, decisiveness, judgement, problem solving, and leadership. I was unsuccessful in keeping this journal and merely wrote whatever was sufficient to meet the requirements of the program. My colleagues admitted that they did the same. We all believed that we did not do it because we were too busy since most of us were assistant principals.

However, now I'm a principal and I am finding time to keep a reflective journal. What's the difference in this experience and my former experiences? Admittedly, data for this journal were useful for my dissertation, a very compelling motivator! Aside from this difference, however, I notice an attitudinal shift related to the purpose of the journal.

In my former experience, I had no knowledge of research on reflective practice. I did not know that the actual recording of experience caused analytic processes to shape and improve future practice. I viewed the keeping of the journal instrumentally--as an exercise in accountability to meet requirements.

Because I viewed that journal as "someone else's" idea rather than mine, I spent a lot of time trying to figure out what was appropriate to record. I wasn't sure what "they" wanted. My current reflections on practice are guided by me alone, and I am also using metacognitive awareness to study my own reflections. This work is exciting to me because I am immediately aware of its relevance. It is very "actionable" in my daily practice as I use what I learned the night before.

Another important difference in my current journal use is the fact that I am approaching my current reflective work from a research standpoint. Bennett (1994) indicated that teachers' attitudes toward research affected their ability to engage in action research. With that finding in mind, I believe that using my reflections as research data to question the fit between the principalship and ministry has made reflection a more active process. In other words, inductive inquiry is always "behind my mind" as I write, thereby somewhat objectifying reflections as "data" and guiding me almost non-consciously toward purposeful thought. In former experiences, my attempts to reflect seemed to "go all over the place"

or to "go nowhere." This time, my research focus seems to provide a sense of why and how to think about my work.

Finally, the most important difference in this experience is the use of a frame, the "principal as minister," that is very accessible to me. In my former experience, which was also a study of my leadership practice, the frame was not my own. Instead, I was asked to record instances of the use of leadership skills that had been practiced in training. Though the model sounds like sensible pedagogical practice, it didn't work for me and my colleagues. We did not do it. My experience tells me that reflective journals cannot be contrived. Journaling is an active process that requires one's own freedom to shape its direction. The fact that the frame is my own is a critical difference that invites meaning and purpose. The fact that the components--pastoral and prophetic, pedagogic, and priestly--are broad allows me freedom to look at my experience in its entirety and find examples that fit the frame without feeling constricted or contrived. By choosing to look only at prophetic and pastoral components, I can readily focus the data. My experience, so far, is that when reflective work is developed out of one's own questions, it becomes an active process of discovery and pursuit of meaning.

A key implication for staff development, then, is the use of a professional journal to conduct one's own field of inquiry. Studying one's own practice by developing a frame that fits the practitioner's values and

theory is far more productive than applying constructs that are not particularly meaningful.

Carroll (1991) posits that two views of reality are emergent in educational literature as well as ministry, the objectivist and constructivist views. The objectivist view aims at providing practitioners with the most accurate, scientifically derived knowledge available to be applied in given professional situations. In contrast, the constructivist view posits that reality is always to some extent constructed by us and the communities to which we belong.

"Professional knowledge and practice is, in the constructionist view, also perspectival, constructed by us as we bring our particular lenses to the situation," explains Carroll (p. 150). According to Carroll, as practitioners, we are likely to hold varied perspectives on the means and ends of practice, due to differences in assumptions, traditions or theories to which we ascribe. Our judgments about the rightness, adequacy, or effectiveness of our decisions will be, therefore, relative. They are constructions that we create from our particular advantage point in our reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. The usefulness of constructivist methods in developing themes for reflective study and journaling is a supported in my study.

A second implication of my study for staff development is the use of training and support models in ministry for principals. Because my study indicated striking parallels between the role of ministers and at least one

principal, might there not be parallel needs in training and development? Daresh's (1995) study of the training programs for the priesthood identified the important emphasis self awareness and self understanding play in preparation for the priesthood. Generally, all candidates for the ministry participate in a clinical pastoral education program, a semester of closely supervised professional experience in which a small cohort group of candidates meet regularly with a clinical supervisor to reflect individually and in the group upon their practice (R. Beal, personal communication, Mar. 23, 1996). Candidates experience the importance of regular self examination and reflection on practice. Evans (1995) has developed and piloted a supervision model of reflective practice for teachers based on the ministry model used at Union Theological Seminary for the clinical pastoral education program. This model invites teachers to engage on the prophetic level of eliciting their faith in their mission. Such a model and others that may be gleaned from clinical pastoral education, such as learning contracts (Coll,1991) and autobiography (Pohly, 1993) might connect teachers and principals with their professional mission and infuse them with the moral and spiritual dimension of their practice (Deal and Bolman, 1996).

## My "Principal as Minister" Story

Robert Coles recounts the assertion of poet-doctor William Carlos Williams that success in the medical or any other profession is closely linked to personal morality :

> Dr. Williams was constantly urging me not to allow natural egotism to obstruct a larger view of what it is that any profession offers in the way of moral possibilities and hazards. So often, he pointedly reminded me, students soon to become doctors, lawyers, architects, businessmen, teachers, or engineers are understandably preoccupied with their performing selves, with matters of technique, of knowledge--even though, he insisted, "it is your response to the ethical questions that will make you what you are... the ultimate test of a person's worth as a doctor or teacher or lawyer has to do not only with what he or she knows, but with how he or she behaves with another person, the patient or student or client" (Coles, 1989, pp. 118-119).

Coles reports that Williams recommended moral instruction in the form of storytelling in literary fiction, nonfiction, and personal sharing by professionals as one way to develop " a reliable thoroughfare, maybe--a direct passage from the world of thinking to that of day-to-day living" (p. 120).

Williams specified one way to improve medical education: "... let's have some heart-to-heart stories to tell each other, the folks who teach medicine and the folks who are learning it" (p. 118).

I, too, am a devotee of story. In sharing and studying some of the stories of my own leadership practice, I have deepened my understanding of my practice and, perhaps, provided some "heart-to-heart stories" that may provoke thought in others.

Like William Carlos Williams, I subscribe to the notion that one way to improve the practice of school principals is to tell our stories. Reflection

on those stories uncovers a dimension of moral meaning that has potential for transforming leadership theory and practice.

As Kyle and Hovda argue, "Action research has the potential of increasing the knowledge base if we have the opportunity to learn from the findings and insights provided by practitioners. And, through the opportunity to engage in action research, many practitioners may find new opportunities for professional growth" (1987, p. 175).

By undertaking this study, I explored a road not taken and discovered a new opportunity. Earlier in my life, two roads diverged. Through reflection, I learned to see with a different lens. Today, two roads have merged.

# APPENDIX

Examples of the weekly newsletter, The Wildcat Weekly, are found on the following pages. Identifying information has been deleted.

# WILDCAT WEEKLY

August 29, 1994 Middle School Staff Newsletter

## REFLECTIONS FROM JAN

Welcome to our first edition of the Wildcat Weekly. In interviews with many of you this summer, you told me that we need to improve discipline, morale and communication. Our training in Cooperative Discipline and consistent use of its principles as well as consistent training of students in our high expectations will improve discipline. The key word is consistent - we must all do our part. Kudos to for a wonderful workshop and a great start!

One way to improve morale and communication in an organization is the regular publication of a newsletter. I hope the Wildcat Weekly will become a vehicle for sharing team news, counselor updates, administrator info, student achievement, a brag sheet - whatever we think worthy to print. and I are serving as co-editors and publishers (neither of us are accomplished desktop publishers!), and we invite any interested parties to help! Turn in your 'stuff' to the Wildcat Weekly box in the office each Thursday morning; we plan to publish each Monday morning. I suggest someone from each team and each department assume responsibility for contributions to the Wildcat.

In a recent article, Creating Accountability in Big City Schools, Linda Darling-Hammond and Carol Ascher (1991) contrast the difference between bureaucratic accountability, which can only ensure uniform procedures, and professional accountability, which seeks to ensure responsible decisionmaking by supporting practices that are learner-centered and knowledge-based. In my interactions with you individually, in teams, in departments and as a faculty, I hope to establish an inquiry ethic that seeks to continually evaluate what is going on, not only what is occurring but why it is happening and whether existing practices are accomplishing what the school community wants to accomplish. These questions should be raised in every faculty and team meeting. Teacher isolation in classrooms has traditionally worked against collective questioning and reflection. We now have the opportunity through daily team time to create a climate of professional accountability in which we struggle together to establish best practices in our teaching strategies, interpersonal approaches for particular students, meaningful curriculum and assessment outcomes and increased partnership with parents. The use of our time to improve teaching and learning will be the measure of our professional accountability.

I am excited about the opportunity to work with all of you at I am grateful to so many who have been helpful in getting me started. Our administrative team - and and our support team - - have patiently and supportively showed me the ropes. They are getting tired of training principals! Seriously, I want all of you to know what a great staff and faculty you have at .

We've begun to develop a positive team spirit here at . Let's all work especially hard to be supportive of one another. Create a great year!

## WHOOPS!

**The National Middle School Conference is scheduled November 3 - 6! Sorry, there was a confusion about the dates. If you signed up to go, please let or know if you still can go. We must register today to**

**get discount rates!**

## A THANK YOU

My heartfelt thanks for the fruit basket to all of my friends at Middle - Ms Calvert, the faculty and all of the office staff (who treat me like family). Your kindness means so much to me and I promise all of us are going to have a great year.

P. S. To and his staff:
Thanks for all of your help and for making the school look so nice.

PTSA President

## REMEMBER

Turn in your key assessment form, indicating which keys you have and which keys you need, to ASAP. She will send in a work order for new keys on Tuesday. Also, I need a list of addresses, phone numbers and birthdays for my use. We plan to publish this information for the staff; please let know if there is any information you do not wish to be published.

## *HAPPY BIRTHDAY!*

August babies are : and

September 5:
September 6:

## FYI BOX

In the Collaboration room, an FYI box will contain information regarding field trips, contests, grants, etc. Be sure to check it regularly.

See FYI Box for:

- Energy Poster Contest - Oct. 7
- Kentucky Kingdom Outdoor Classroom Program - Sept. 21

## HOMEROOM TEACHERS AND COUNSELORS

Membership counts by classroom (class counts) will be conducted on the following days: August 29, August 31, September 6 and September 9. At the end of first period, you will be directed over the PA to turn in the class count forms (**You should have the form for August 29; the others will be put in your mailbox on the designated day**). After your forms are turned in, the counselors will be responsible to count all new enrollees. I will report this data on each of these days at 11 AM. **Our budget is based on these figures, so it is important to be accurate.** You only need to report the total number of students who are present and the total number of black students (because of racial compliance laws).

**Also, please encourage students to stress the importance of student insurance to their parents. We will have less hassles later on when students are injured if insurance is in effect!**

## XEROX MACHINES

I recommended to the PM Committee that we wait to see if we really need a new Xerox machine before we spend $8000 for a new one. We really need a new Xerox machine! Mr. , our repairman, with whom I've spent a lot of time recently, also says we can do a better job of taking care of the machines we have by:

- having designated key operators ( and ) as the sole individuals to service machines
- turning off all machines at close of day
- prohibiting student use of copiers
- using the multiple copier in the Collaboration Room for copies of 25 or more
- showing our new staff how to use the machines properly - thanks!

*HAVE A GREAT DAY!*

# WILDCAT WEEKLY

**September 6, 1994** **Middle School Staff Newsletter**

## REFLECTIONS FROM JAN

We are off to a great beginning! The students are on their best behavior and even happy to be back. Lunch is almost on time! The busses are coming and going with regularity. We're becoming more familiar with our schedules, our classes and our colleagues. Parents are coming to visit.

Middle School is in session - thanks to all of you!

Each one of you in his or her way have given tremendous team effort this week. You have been patient when kids and schedules and clocks weren't behaving properly. Instead of focusing on a job description, you focused on the job that needed to be done and took initiative and helped! Without your cooperation and effort, the school climate would not be the inviting, positive place I sense it to be. I appreciate each and every one of you. Have a great week!

## VISITING THE EIGHTH GRADE...

I spent Friday morning visiting the eighth grade. I saw students problem-solving ways to avoid conflict with high school students, competing in a spelling contest, exploring optical illusions, conducting student interviews (I was interviewed by an exceptional young man), preparing for a quiz on the scientific method, and actively participating in classes. Learning activities were KERA-related. Many classrooms featured posters on the writing process and other assessment - related skills. I saw a teacher sensitively handle a special education student that was exhibiting problems , and I saw orderly hallways supervised by teachers. I was really impressed by our eighth grade students and will continue to challenge them to be role models for our sixth and seventh graders, whom I will be visiting this week.

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

*has a today!*

## COUNSELOR'S CORNER

Tentative dates for the Eighth Grade Career Assessments are:

| | |
|---|---|
| Teacher training: | September 13<br>12:05 - 12:50 |
| Test day: | September 20 |

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The following list of expectations for teachers (and staff) was brainstormed by a group of our students in a class:

*GOOD TEACHERS*

- help students learn
- does not nag
- knows a great deal about the subject

- makes class interesting, fun, hands on, entertaining
- rewards students
- 'kid' at heart
- field trips
- understanding
- don't take out your 'bad mood' on the students
- helps students learn from their mistakes
- use contracts instead of suspensions - if possible
- homework for 45 minutes if daily work is done

## FUTURE CONNECTIONS

The Foundation has selected Middle School to conduct its pilot project, Future Connections. The focus of the project is to increase high expectations and college attendance among disadvantaged youth. and will provide training to us on September 27 during all planning periods and team time as well as the Professional Development meeting after school from 2:40 - 4:40. Stipends will be paid for planning periods and the extra hour after school (one hour was already a scheduled faculty meeting). There will be a meeting of the Steering Committee on September 26 at 1:00; see Denise for details. MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

## OPEN RESPONSE

During our opening week inservice, you recorded your beliefs on teaching, learning and assessment as President-elect of the National Middle School Association. The following thoughtful response was left on a table just so I would publish it (I'm sure):

"Students should learn content combined with social skills, study skills, real life lessons, thinking skills and cultural awareness. Different students learn best in different ways but most middle school students require structure before developing independently (particularly the students at who don't have structured home lives). A combination of achievement testing and assessment testing would give a more accurate picture of the student's ability."

## FYI BOX

Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill will present a special program for school groups, Oct. 3 - 14. Fall On The Farm is designed to introduce students to 19th century farm life. For information, see brochure in FYI Box.

## WILDCAT TIME

There are many advantages to eliminating bell tones. The building is quieter. Students no longer mistake the bell announcing the end of class for the ritual beginning of five minutes of out-of-control behavior that students call a 'break'! HOWEVER, we are challenged to begin and end class on time, and to deliver and pick up students in the cafeteria and related arts on time, or else we will create bottlenecks in our halls. Therefore, each morning I will announce official Wildcat Time, as synchronized by the clock in the mailroom. Be sure to check your watches and clocks each morning so we can all be on Wildcat time!

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